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Drama and opera : their history
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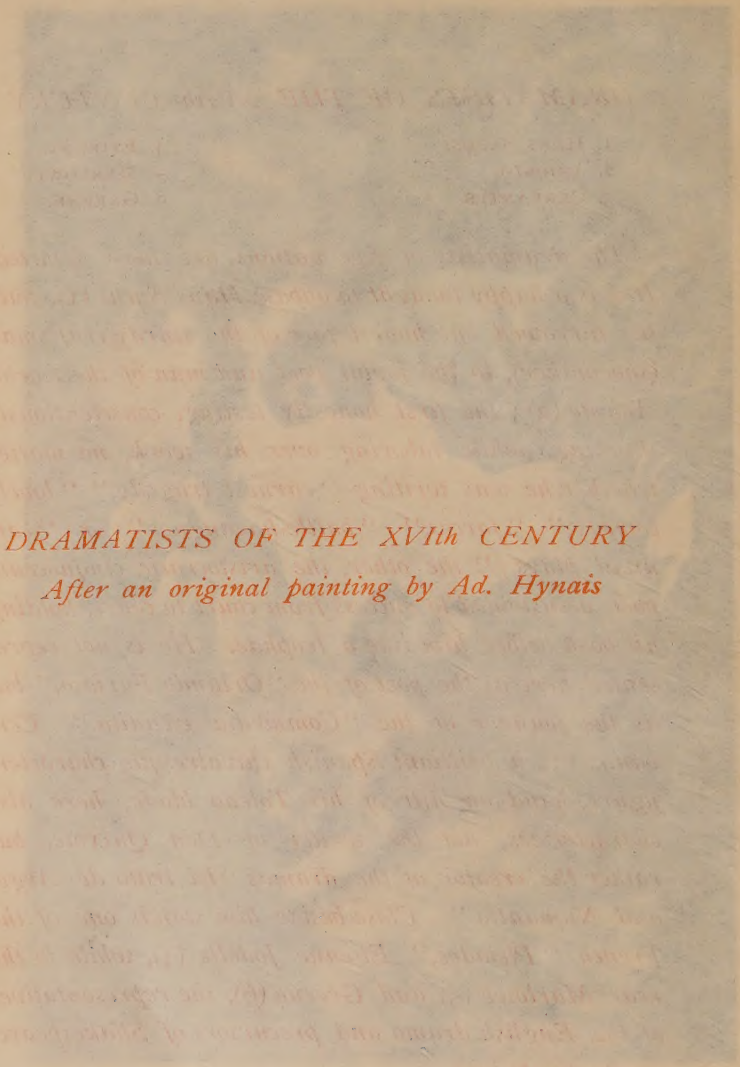
DRAMATISTS OF THE XVIth CENTURY

1. Hans Sachs.
2. Ariosto.
3. Cervantes.
4. Etienne.
5. Marlowe.
6. Greene.

The dramatists of five nations are here depicted. It was a happy thought to oppose Hans Sachs (1), *with the furrowed but honest face of the sturdy craftsman* (*shoemaker*), *to the jovial poet and man of the world, Ariosto* (2); *the first honestly testing, conscientiously thinking, while laboring over his work, no matter whether he was writing "earnest tragedy," "lovely comedy," "farces," "battle-harangues" or "carnival plays;" the other, the aristocratic cinquocento poet, accustomed to success from court to court, holding his book before him like a trophae. He is not represented here as the poet of the "Orlando Furioso," but as the founder of the "Commedia Erudita." Cervantes* (3), *a brilliant Spanish chivalresque character-figure, hand on hilt of his Toledo blade, here also characterizes, not the writer of Don Quixote, but rather the creator of the dramas "El trato de Argel and Numantia." Close beside him stands one of the French "Pleiades," Etienne Jodelle* (4), *while to the rear Marlowe* (5) *and Greene* (6), *the representatives of the English drama and precursors of Shakespeare, occupy the picture.*



DRAMATISTS OF THE XVIth CENTURY

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French Drama

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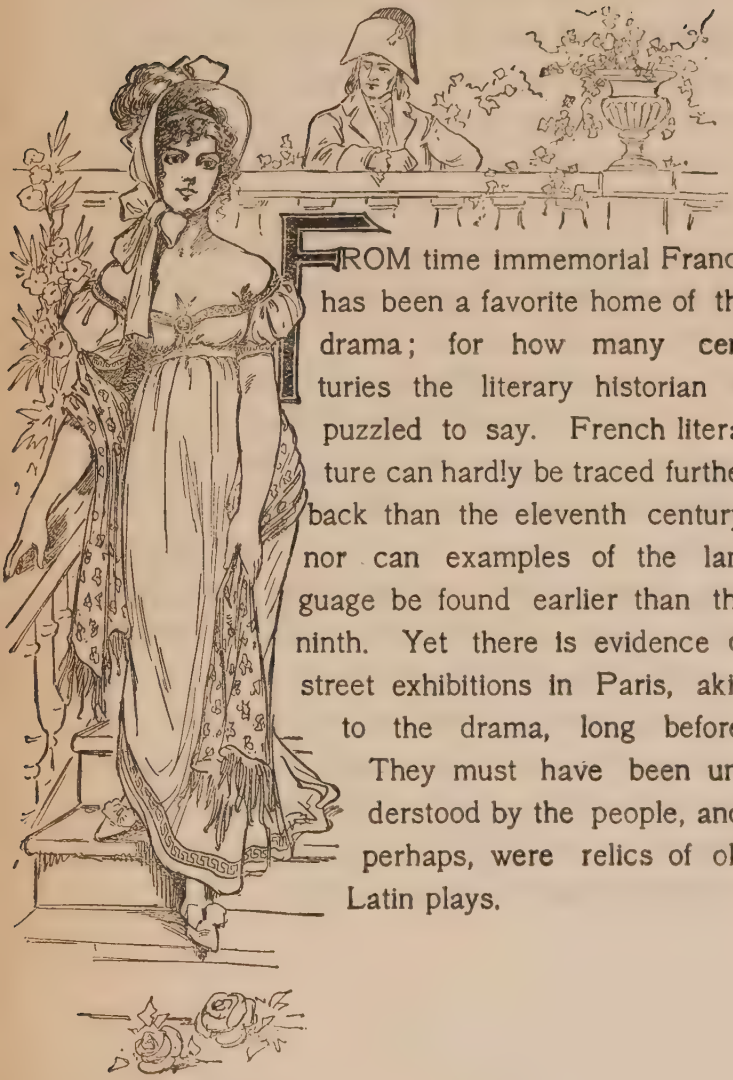
Prologue



FROM time immemorial France has been a favorite home of the drama; for how many centuries the literary historian is puzzled to say. French literature can hardly be traced further back than the eleventh century, nor can examples of the language be found earlier than the ninth. Yet there is evidence of street exhibitions in Paris, akin to the drama, long before. They must have been understood by the people, and, perhaps, were relics of old Latin plays.

In France, as in other parts of Europe, in the Middle Ages the clergy tried by dramatic illustrations to impress on the minds of the illiterate people the historic facts of Christianity. These mysteries and miracle plays, becoming popular, passed from the churches to scaffolds in the streets and fields, from the clergy to troupes of lay actors. One of these companies—the Brethren of the Passion—obtained in 1402 royal permission to fit up a hall for performances—the first theatre in Paris. A great expansion of the drama followed, and the stage, with its treatment of life, became the literary school of the public.

A new age dawned in the reign of Francis I.—the glorious period of the Renaissance, when the modern world awoke to behold and admire the beauties of classical antiquity. Jodelle and Garnier, drawing their inspiration from Latin authors rather than the Greek originals, moulded the primitive type of French classic tragedy. All did not submit slavishly to the classical yoke. The most prominent playwright, Alexander Hardi, had visited Spain, and in his numerous dramas followed the example of Lopé de Vega in making everything depend on rapid action.

The great Cardinal Richelieu wished to rule in literature as well as in affairs of State. His permanent contribution to this department was the founding of the Academy which has guided with general discretion the development of French genius. The Academy, alleging the authority of Aristotle, established the canons of the drama which prevailed in the French theatre for two centuries. Their central principle is the maintenance of the so-called unities of time, place and action, even to a manifestly absurd degree. But the greatest tragic poet of France, Pierre Corneille submitted only partially and reluctantly, and in fact won his supremacy by the *Cid*, acclaimed by Paris, though censured by the Academy for its violation of the rules. Other masterpieces of historical portraiture and moral grandeur established his reputation. His principal comic effort, *Le Menteur*, achieved equal success.

In the meantime Racine, thirty years younger, improved on his predecessor's method, and, better disposed to meet the public demand, became his ungrateful rival. Louis XIV. extended favor to both in their prime, but coldly withdrew it in their age. Racine's tragedies gave prominence to the

passion of love. His heroes are noted for their gracious glory, his heroines for the pleasing variety of their affection. His poetry is marked by the excellence of its versification. His best works are pronounced by French critics the perfection of their drama. His *Les Plaideurs*, which is given in full in this work, is the most skillful modern adaptation of an idea taken from Aristophanes.

In the Augustan age of Louis XIV. Molière is the bright luminary of comedy. Actor, manager and playwright, he won the favor of both king and people, yet was excluded from the Academy and proscribed by the Church. His productions cover the entire range of social comedy, and extend beyond to sprightly farces, brilliant ballets and splendid operas. The faults and foibles of contemporary society are wittily ridiculed in plays which still hold the stage. The highest reach of his genius is in the scathing exposure of hypocrisy in *Tartuffe*. Our record in this volume closes with the premature death of this genuine and genial master of mirth.

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French Drama.

I.

France Inherits Roman Civilization.

France owes its modern name to a German tribe which in the fifth Christian century conquered the land formerly named Gallia or Gaul. The Franks, following the example of the Gauls, whom they had subdued, accepted much of the ancient Roman civilization. Just as readily they were baptized into the Christian religion at the command of their king, Clovis. They even abandoned their own language and adopted the Latin dialect which they found prevailing in their new abode. The official and literary language long remained classical, while the popular speech widely diverged from that standard.

It is impossible to determine at what period the French language which was thus evolved became entirely distinct from its Latin original. The oldest written record of it is the oaths sworn to a treaty at Strasburg, A. D. 842, by Louis the German and Charles the Bald and their respective armies. The next example of the new language which was struggling to light is a

short poem on St. Eulalia, preserved in a manuscript of the tenth century.

But even before the earlier date there are notices of something akin to the drama in France. It is recorded that bands of actors and joculatores, or jugglers, gave performances in the streets of Paris. Classical tragedy and comedy were unknown except in the few monasteries which cherished the remains of Latin literature. The drama, on account of its pagan origin and its strong impress of pagan religion and morality, had been sternly suppressed by the Christian Church. Yet, in its humbler forms, relics and traditions of this attractive amusement lingered among the people. There were, indeed, some strolling performers, who wore a sort of ecclesiastical dress and sang ballads or recited dialogues relating to acts of the saints. Though they sought approval of their superiors as promoting knowledge of the true religion, they often relaxed in such efforts and indulged in unseemly practices. Charles the Great, recognizing their evil tendency, issued a prohibitory decree, A. D. 789. Henceforth they disappear from the page of history for centuries. Yet we must not forget Taillefer, who rode foremost into the fight at Hastings in 1066, singing his songs of Roland and Charlemagne while he tossed his sword in the air and caught it again. Professional actors like him were often attached to the train of barons and knights.

Church Plays.

In a former volume the remarkable fact that the revival of the drama in modern Europe was due to the

Christian Church has been abundantly proved and illustrated. At first, certain parts of the church ritual were expanded in action, and especially at the great religious festivals of Christmas and Easter attempts were made to exhibit vividly before the faithful what the service was intended to commemorate. The Wise Men from the East, who had been guided by a miraculous star, worshipped and presented their gifts before the cradle of the Divine babe; the Virgin Mother was represented by a girl with a child in her arms; the Resurrection was suggested by a priest rising from a mimic sepulchre. Later the action was extended, and dialogues were added. These were, of course, in Latin, the universal language of the Church. Gradually scenes from other Scripture stories were combined with those strictly belonging to the service. These church dramas may have been inartistic, but they were characterized by strict simplicity and earnest devotion.

After a time, as has already been shown, these or similar miracle-plays were performed outside of the churches, in the streets of towns or in the fields, at fairs or places of public resort. The actors were priests or monks, and the performance was still religious, including legends of the saints, as well as Scripture histories. At times, perhaps, a touch of nature was added to gratify the rabble who flocked to the show.

Minstrels and Jongleurs.

The minstrel was one of the most picturesque figures of mediæval life. He seems to have inherited some

features of the Roman histrions and others of the bards of Gaul and Germany. In the summer, arrayed in particolored costume, and with a harp or viol across his shoulders, he ambled on a gaily-caparisoned mule from town to town and from castle to castle. His song was introduced and followed by feats of agility and legerdemain, and was accompanied with such crude music as he could command. His themes were the miracles of the saints, the stories of Scripture, or perhaps more frequently, the legends of later heroes. At the country fairs and in the market places he gathered an appreciative crowd, and in the feudal castles, whose monotony, except in actual warfare, was broken only by tournaments, he was the most welcome. High and low, old and young, glowed with enthusiasm as he sang of the prowess of Christian warriors. Lords and ladies took delight in rewarding him with substantial gifts. Kings and princes attached the most skillful of his class to their retinue. Even bishops and abbesses sought to retain their services permanently.

Trouvères and Troubadours.

Minstrelsy may be deemed as the mother of a literature which paved the way for a revival of the drama. The accents of these versatile gleemen aroused the Muses from their protracted sleep. In nearly all parts of what is now known as France the "gay science" found more or less gifted votaries among the well-born cultured. The trouvères and troubadours successively took up the lyre, the former to the north of the Loire,

and the latter under the softer skies of the south, where the Langue d'Oc, a tongue resembling Italian rather than French, was spoken. Uninfluenced by ancient models, but not free, especially after the first crusade, from a tinge of Oriental imagery and refinement, the consequent efflorescence of poetry, viewed as a whole, presents a striking picture of the thought and sentiment of the age which produced it, the age when chivalry was gilding the darker features of feudalism and the misery it wrought.

That the merits of minstrel literature obtained a wide acknowledgment there can be no doubt. Once heard, a passage of noble poetry, with or without the aid of music, could not be forgotten. "Many of your love verses to me," writes Hélöise to Abelard, "were so beautiful in their language and melody that your name was incessantly in the mouths of all, and even the most illiterate were charmed. You caused women to envy me. Every tongue spoke of your Hélöise; every street and every house resounded with my name." In other words, the minstrels were more sought after and recompensed than ever, and their social status advanced. Making Paris their headquarters, those of the north formed themselves into a corporation, acquired exclusive privileges, received permission to style their chief Roi, and became so opulent that two members of the fraternity alone could afford to build a church and a hospital in the street they inhabited. While this may seem incredible, it should be remembered that the purses which the jongleurs carried in their belts as a part of their equipment were always well filled at the mansions of

the rich, where they were lavishly entertained, even the poor also contributing freely of their means.

Decline of Minstrelsy.

The success and popularity of these jongleurs attracted unworthy followers and imitators. These low fellows, unable to obtain entrance to courts and baronial halls, donned grotesque dresses, stationed themselves in market-place or village green and supplemented their verses with coarse buffoonery, feats of legerdemain, tricks with monkeys, and doggerel appealing to a vitiated taste. It was to no purpose that Philip Augustus and Saint Louis banished them from the country, or that the poets, finding the honored names of trouvère and troubadour trailed through the dirt, angrily denounced them as bastards, and ceased to provide them with verse. The contempt in which they came to be held is clearly shown by the fact that jonglerie was employed as a term for anything base, and a decree was issued condemning them to imprisonment as rogues and vagabonds.

Church Drama.

Meanwhile the place of the Latin prose play in the festivals of the Church was now occupied by a Mystery in French verse. No pains seem to have been spared to heighten the attractiveness of the latter in its new home. Characterized in itself by a simple dignity befitting the treatment of such themes, it was acted with

all the pomp and circumstance associated with Roman Catholic worship; and nowhere shall we find a grander or more impressive spectacle than a Mystery of the Passion, as performed in one of these grand old Gothic piles. Banners hung above the fretted arches; the odor of incense filled the air; tapers shone brightly in the dim light from storied and diversely-colored windows; elaborate processions wound their way through the aisles to the strains of solemn music; the figures of the priest-players stood out in clear relief against the splendor of the altar, as, facing thousands of rapt spectators, they gravely declaimed, with appropriate gestures, the dialogue intended to set forth the events which led up to the Crucifixion.

Street Performances.

So potent a means of entertaining the masses could not long be kept within the pale of the sanctuary, where, to use a simile from Goethe, it was like an oak in a vase of porcelain. It disengaged itself from direct ecclesiastical influence, returned to the market-place, and became an independent institution. Mysteries and Miracles—the latter dealing with the Virgin and saints—were played by guilds and companies expressly organized for the purpose, and no popular festivity was deemed complete without one or more of these instructive entertainments. They were given on scaffolds in the streets, with the actors in more or less archaic costume, with an organ at the back to accompany a chorus of angels, and also with some attempt to indicate

the place of the different actions. Occasionally farce was introduced into the most serious scenes. Especially comic was the figure of the devil, who, appearing on the stage as he was popularly supposed to be—a deformed and hairy sprite, with horns, dragon's wings, long tail and cloven feet—was subjected to the greatest cruelties and indignities. Nothing was then deemed too cruel for the presumed author of all the ills and annoyances experienced by mankind. Roars of laughter filled the air when holy men spat in his face, when liberties were taken with his tail, when a stalwart anchorite brought him to the dust with a well-directed blow, and, above all, when a courageous saint seized him by the nose with red-hot pincers.

The Brethren of the Passion.

One of the companies formed to represent these plays was destined to eclipse all others. In 1398, a number of young artisans devised and appeared in a new *Mystère de la Passion*. Soon afterward, at the instance of wealthy and pious citizens, they erected a hall at a village near Paris, in order to continue their performances without fear of being interrupted by bad weather; but the authorities put their veto upon the project. Four years later, the Brethren of the Passion, as the artisans were called, appealed against this decree to Charles VI, who, having seen their Mystery performed, issued orders permitting them to do as they pleased.

North of the Seine, hard by the Porte St. Denis, an Hôpital de la Trinité had been built by two foster-

brothers for the benefit of travellers arriving after the time for admission to the city proper. Here the Brethren took up their quarters; and here, in a large salon, duly fitted up, they appeared in the *Mystery of the Passion* and other sacred dramas on Sundays and during certain festivals of the Church.

The First Paris Playhouse.

Thus was established the first of Parisian theatres, its performances serving as the models on which similar entertainments were afterward given throughout the country. About mid-day, having paid two sous for admission, the spectator passed into a hall sixty-three feet by eighteen in size, and on the level of the street. There were no seats, the audience, which consisted in the main of sober citizens and their children, with a sprinkling of the clergy, having only the pit to stand in. The stage was divided by floors into three sections, each with a painting at the back. The highest represented Paradise, the next a spot in the Holy Land, and the third the infernal regions. In the first, which reached the roof, a man of severe and venerable aspect, enthroned in a chair, impersonated the Creator, the Virtues standing by in picturesque attitudes. Most of the action, of course, passed in the second stage, whither angels and devils respectively descended or mounted as their presence on earth was required. It was through the mouth of a dragon emitting fire from its eyes and nostrils that the devil and his myrmidons came on and vanished. Some of the scenes were

chanted to music, usually from an organ. The players, when not acting, sat in a semi-circle behind those who were. Judged by isolated passages, the play might be deemed grotesque, indecent, and even irreverent, yet it was undoubtedly in full accord with the religious notions of the time.

The Basochians and Enfants Sans Souci.

The success of the Mystery speedily led to the introduction of a lighter and purely secular drama. Foremost among the guilds in Paris at this time was that of the Clercs de la Basoche, minor officials of the city courts. Established in the thirteenth century by Philippe le Bel, this guild took an important part in the administration of the law, attained to the dignity of a royaume, and was reviewed once a year by the reigning monarch. Eager to add to their renown by means of dramatic performances on their fête days, the Basochians now introduced forms of plays which have already been described—the Moralité, the figures in which are chiefly personifications of sentiments and abstract ideas, and the Farce, which may be roughly described as a resuscitation of the homely fable in dramatic form. The farces were the first French writings in which the mirror of the drama was held up to everyday life and character. Henpecked husbands, imperious wives, exasperating mothers-in-law, good-for-nothing monks, lip-valorous soldiers, and other personages were connected with more or less whimsical adventures, the dialogue being often lighted up by flashes of

wit, by satires on some common foible, or pleasantries at the expense of the younger officials. Except at times of public rejoicing, when they played on a scaffold in the street, the theatre of the Basochians was the hall of the Palais de Justice, their stage, the great marble table on which were served the banquets formerly given by kings of France. But the Basochians were not long permitted to monopolize these new forms of the drama. The Enfants sans Souci, a band of educated and frolicsome youths, all of whom figured in the revels of the court, and who, wearing on their heads a sort of hood, garnished on each side with an ass's ear, annually made a formal entry into Paris under the leadership of their chief, the prince of Fools, began to represent in the Halles what they termed a Sottie, in substance a copy of the farce, but weaker in story, political in purpose, and keenly satirical in character. That it hit the taste of its hearers there can be no doubt; for the Basochians added Sotties to their repertory, while the Brethren of the Passion induced the Enfants sans Souci to play a piece at the Hôpital de la Trinité after each representation of the Mystery.

Decline of Religious Drama.

Notwithstanding the intermittent hostility of the Parlement, farce outlived the graver drama from which it sprang. For some time past the popularity of the Mysteries and Miracles had been steadily declining. They had been spun out until the representation of the shortest occupied several days, and the most pious

spectator must have found them wearisome. They had ceased to be in harmony with the temper of the age. The dawn of latter-day civilization had broadened into what seemed almost as the perfect day. The intellectual agitation induced by the events of the last hundred years—the revival of ancient literature, the overthrow of the Ptolemaic system, the downfall of the Moors in Spain, the discoveries of Iberian navigators, political changes and the partial liberation of the Church—had lifted the human mind out of the narrow ruts in which it had so long been content to move. New ideas began to hold sway; an ardent and restless spirit of inquiry was abroad in the land; opinions which seemed to be bound up with life itself were rejected or essentially altered. Unlike other mediæval institutions, chivalry not excepted, religion emerged with added strength from the ordeal; for while a vague skepticism may have found expression in the pages of Rabelais and Montaigne, among the nation at large the old child-like simplicity of faith gave way to a higher sense of the dignity and grandeur of Christianity.

The Renaissance also served to raise the standard of literary taste, inasmuch as, aided by the invention of printing, it was bringing imperishable monuments of ancient poetry and prose within the reach of all who could read. Under these circumstances the sacred drama, with its odd intermixture of the sublime and the grotesque, its crudeness of form and substance, rapidly lost the charm it had once possessed. Catholics and Huguenots united in denouncing it as likely to bring religion into contempt, and its defects in the way of

style were glaring enough to evoke a flood of ridicule. The Brethren of the Passion, so far from appreciating the necessity of reforming their entertainments, sought to compensate themselves for the coldness of the lettered playgoers by appealing more than ever to the unlettered —in other words, by giving increased prominence to satire and scandal. By this change of policy they simply accelerated their doom; and a few years later, the French religious drama, the oldest institution of the kind in western Europe, passed away with the state of society which permitted such things to exist.

Condemnation of Secular Drama.

The great majority of the priesthood could not reconcile themselves to the purely secular drama, especially after they saw that a great revolution was in progress about them. Might not the theatre be employed to disseminate ideas more or less inimical to their doctrines and pretensions? Were they not really warming a viper in their bosom? The decree of 1548, abolishing the religious drama, did away with the only reason they had for dissembling their hostility to the farce—namely, a reluctance to throw discredit upon an institution which partly devoted itself to the service of Christianity. Henceforward the clergy were uncompromising opponents of theatrical amusement in any shape. They reprehended play-going as incompatible with true devotion, purity of life and sobriety of thought. They condemned the actor to a kind of social outlawry, declaring that, unless he

solemnly forswore his profession, he could not receive the holy communion or be entitled to Christian burial.

Influence of the Renaissance.

The great unsealing of the waters, known as the Renaissance, had an immediate and decisive effect upon every form of creative thought, and upon the drama more than any other. In Italy, where the movement took its rise, tragedy and comedy of the ancient pattern, but often instinct with the spirit of religion and chivalry, were flourishing side by side with a farce indigenous to the soil. Italy enjoyed, at this time, all the authority which a nearly unequalled success in the arts of peace can confer. In painting and sculpture, poetry and prose, commerce and industry, she virtually gave laws to the world. France quickly fell under her influence; the classical drama came to be enthusiastically imitated in Paris, and the boast of Cardinal d'Amboise, "we shall be more Italian than Italy itself," was justified, at least as far as this artificial growth was concerned.

College Plays and the Pleiade.

In France, as elsewhere, this revival was largely due to the study of ancient literature in the colleges. The speech-day programmes here had long included the performance of some new sottie—a custom not free from danger, as the scholars, not to be outdone in temerity by the incorrigible Basochians, indulged in satire at the

expense of the court itself. More than one decree was launched against them by the Parlement; and Francois I, finding that his blameless sister, Marguerite de Valois, had been represented at the collège de Navarre as a "furie," threw into prison as many of the authors and actors as he could lay hands upon. If the authorities apprehended a renewal of the annoyance they were soon reassured. Formerly avoided or discouraged, Greek and Latin learning was now in fashion with the merest striplings, and translations of classical plays took the place of farces in the collegiate entertainments. *Hecuba* and *Electra,* for instance, were rendered into French verse by Lazare de Baif, ambassador at Venice, for the collège de Coquerel, whither his natural son, Jean Antoine, was sent a few years afterward. Among the friends of the latter were Pierre de Ronsard, Étienne Jodelle, Dubellay, Rémi-Belleau, and Pontus de Tiard. Each of these youths had a genuine enthusiasm for classical lore; and eventually, in conjunction with their tutor, Dorat, they formed the project of enriching their native language by means of poetry in which ancient words, both Greek and Latin, should be introduced wherever practicable. The enterprise was truly quixotic; but there is no doubt that the "Pleiade," as the seven poets were collectively termed, exercised in many respects a salutary influence upon the literature of their time. Not the least characteristic product of the new school was a version by Ronsard of *Plutus*, executed for the collège de Coquerel in 1549. Each translation met with marked success; and Jodelle, who was intended for the profes-

sion of arms, but whose time appears to have been evenly divided between pleasure and the study of poetry and art, resolved to try the effect of some new plays upon the old lines.

Jodelle.

In 1552, before Jodelle had completed his twenty-first year, his idea was realized under conditions as favorable as the want of trained actors and a good stage would permit. First came the tragedy of *Cléopatre Captive*, represented in the quadrangle of the Hôtel de Rheims, the audience including Henri II, and the flower of his court. Jodelle himself impersonated the Egyptian queen, and among those who supported him were Jean de la Peruse, a dabbler in verse, and Remi-Belleau. Formed upon the Greek model, even to the extent of introducing a chorus, *Cléopatre* depends upon narration to the all but complete exclusion of action, and in point of style may be described as an echo of that of Seneca. Its comparative novelty, however, blinded the spectators to its defects. Pasquier, who was present, tells us that the king presented the author with five hundred crowns from the royal purse, and before long, the performance was repeated in the presence of his Majesty at the collège de Boncourt, all the windows of which, like the court itself, were choked with spectators.

Not content with the laurels he had won as a tragic poet, Jodelle next produced a comedy under the title of *Eugène, ou La Rencontre*. It is a story of modern

French life, with a libertine abbé for the chief personage, and was acted with good success at the Hôtel de Rheims and the collège de Boncourt. Jodelle now found himself in a most enviable position. He was regarded on nearly all hands as a modern Sophocles. The king, in common with the duchesse de Savoie and other leaders of fashion, lavished favors upon him, and his fellow Pleiads, in a spirit which speaks for itself, and made the welkin ring with praises of his "happy courage" and its results. It is to be feared that on one occasion his friends did him more harm than good; for they organized a Bacchic procession in his honor, and the ceremony was sternly denounced by Huguenots and Catholics alike. The charge of irreverence, industriously repeated by jealous poetasters, went far to undermine his popularity. His next play, *Didon se Sacrifiant,* was received with studied coldness by most of the audience, although it is of higher value than *Cléopatre,* and has at least one passage—the invocation to Venus—which deserves to live. Mortified by the rebuff, Jodelle ceased to write for the stage, and even under the pressure of poverty could not be induced to return to it. He died at an early age, his last poem being one in which he likened himself to Anaxagoras.

The New Drama.

But Jodelle's work survived him. The accents of the dramatic muses continued to be heard in the courtyards of the colleges and at royal fêtes. Seneca's *Medea* and *Agamemnon* were successively reproduced

in French, the first by Jean de la Peruse, the poet already referred to, and the other by Charles Toutain. In order to forget a love-disappointment, Jacques Grevin, afterward physician to the duchesse de Savoie, wrote for his Alma Mater, the collège de Beauvais, two comedies, *La Trésorière* and *Les Esbahis,* and one tragedy, *La Mort de César.* For the serious drama he had no vocation; but his lighter pieces, the scene of which is laid in the old Place Maubert, a well-known rendezvous, describe contemporary manners with some gayety and purity of style. Other plays followed, including a few pastoral dramas, until Belleau and Baif, alarmed by these new departures, called attention once more to the example of the ancients. The former composed a five-act comedy in verse, *La Reconnue,* out of an incident of the time; the other, who often drew the rank and fashion of Paris to his house in the Faubourg Saint Marceau by giving a concert there, and who was authorized by the court to establish an academy of music, translated the *Miles Gloriosus* under the title of *Le Brave, ou Taillebras,* and in 1567 had the satisfaction of seeing it performed at the Hôtel de Guise in the presence of Charles IX and Catherine de Medicis.

Garnier.

The new drama had not as yet exhibited much inventive or literary power, but two writers of widely dissimilar gifts now succeeded in relieving it from this reproach. Robert Garnier, lieutenant-general at Mans, had carried off a prize at the Jeux Floraux by an ode,

and the applause bestowed upon this and other of his effusions encouraged him to take a loftier flight. Beginning at the age of thirty-four, he wrote eight tragedies, chiefly on classical subjects, and all of them well received. To far-reaching scholarship, the fruit of a liberal education at Toulouse, he united a fervid imagination, rare delicacy of thought and feeling, and a fine sense of moral dignity. His style, though originally formed upon that of Seneca and the Pleiade, is often characterized by a majestic simplicity, notably in the choruses. Nor did his works fall upon an unappreciative age. In the words of Pasquier, he "was allowed on all hands to have eclipsed his predecessors" in France. Success only stimulated him to greater effort; his *Juives*, which relates to the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, marks the culminating point in a course of progressive improvement, and prouder laurels would probably have fallen to his lot if death had not carried him off in his fifty-sixth year. His faith in antique models did not prevent him from making important innovations, all of which were adopted by other dramatists. His *Bradamanthe*, in addition to containing the first confidant, was the first real tragi-comedy written in French.

Larivey.

One of the contemporaries of Garnier, Pierre de Larivey, a native of Champagne, but of Italian parentage, exercised an equally inspiring influence in comedy. In 1577, a band of Venetian players, named the Gelosi, appeared before Henri III and his court at Blois and the

Hôtel de Bourbon. On their way to Paris they had been taken prisoners by the Huguenots, but were promptly ransomed by the king, at whose invitation they had crossed the Alps. According to L'Étoile, and greatly to the disgust of that eccentric annalist, their audiences were "larger than the congregations of the four best preachers in the capital put together." The repertory of the Gelosi seems to have included examples of Italian comedy in its more popular forms, chiefly the *commedia dell' arte*, with its meagre outline of intrigue and character, on which the actors extemporized their dialogue and by-play. Larivey, who had some connection with the court, was stimulated by these performances to apply himself to dramatic work. Six "pièces facétieuses" from his pen, all more or less founded upon ancient Italian plays, as he was the first to avow, appeared between this time and 1579, and were marked by a verve peculiar to himself.

Popularity of the Secular Drama.

As a result of this impetus, the secular drama found a more permanent home than châteaux and colleges could afford. Yet, for a time, it met with strong opposition from the Basochians and the Enfants sans Souci, as also from the Church, whose more zealous members denounced the theatre as "the house of Satan, and the meeting-place for a thousand scandalous assignations." The war of the League had also a retarding influence; but when peace and prosperity were restored to Paris by Henry IV the drama took vigorous root. No other

form of entertainment enjoyed a tithe of its popularity. Nailed to posts in the streets, theatrical announcements were surrounded by knots of citizens, and the theatre, still at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, was often crowded to its utmost capacity. The curtain rose at two o'clock, or in winter a little earlier, so as to enable spectators to reach their homes before footpads took advantage of the darkness to ply their calling. There were no seats, except a few rows close to the stage for cavaliers and dames of high degree, the floor being covered with a thin layer of rushes. The king, who liked to see and be seen by his subjects, was a frequent guest, and was easily recognized by his gaunt figure, his pleasant laugh and his merry, twinkling eyes. The theatre was dimly lighted with oil lamps, but the gestures and facial expression of the actors could be distinctly seen, as arrayed in modern garb, even in plays founded on ancient history or legend, they recited the sonorous alexandrines of Garnier, or the sprightly dialogue of Larivey.

Plays at Public Fairs.

The success of these players soon deprived them of the monopoly they had enjoyed, which did not apply to the fairs held in the suburbs of Paris, where most of the city's trade was conducted. First, a few provincial comedians established a theatre in the Foire Saint Germain, at that time the most popular in the country. Then, in 1599, another provincial troupe, headed by Mathieu Laporte and his wife, Marie, the first actress of whom any record is preserved, appeared at the Foire

Saint Germain. The lady was a host in herself, and her husband was soon permitted to open a house of his own, afterward known as the Théâtre du Marais.

Montchrétien.

The rival troupes were compelled to rely chiefly on old plays; for of the many dramatists who sought to rival or excel the works of Garnier and Larivey, one only was successful. This was Antoine Montchrétien, a name associated with a somewhat curious history. The son of a Huguenot apothecary, he became an orphan at an early age, and though intended for the army, settled in Paris as a man of letters. But his choice was certainly not through want of courage, for on one occasion he withstood alone a dangerous assault made upon him by the Baron de Gourville and two bravos, for which he received, as damages, twelve thousand livres. For the Hôtel de Bourgogne he wrote several tragedies, which were acted about the year 1600. Encouraged by his success, he wooed and won a titled and wealthy widow, whereupon he assumed the sonorous name of Montchrétien de Vastville. While at work on another tragedy, *L'Écossaise,* dealing with the fate of Mary Queen of Scots, he amused himself with making cutlery at a forge in the Orleans forest, selling his wares, or exposing them for sale, in Paris. He afterward identified himself with the Huguenots at La Rochelle, and while on the road to military fame was killed by a party of royalist soldiers in a hostelry at Trouville. As a dramatist he followed in the track of Garnier, whom

in some respects he surpassed, especially in the management of choruses.

The Three Farce-Players.

The dearth of acceptable plays induced the theatres to turn their attention once more to the farce, a dramatic plant of native and vigorous growth. By doing so, the Hôtel de Bourgogne appears to have struck a mine of wealth, engaging the services of three clever and versatile actors, who, beginning life as baker's apprentices, had already become famous on the stage, under the names of Turlupin, Gros-Guillaume and Gaultier-Garguille. The favorite character of the first was a roguish valet, of the second a pedant, and of the third a supremely stupid old man. Turlupin was held to be unapproachable in the domain of broad comedy, and was of imposing presence. Gros-Guillaume, so called on account of his obesity, had a fund of rich humor, the effect of which was increased by his large black eyes and extremely mobile features. It is said that he kept the audience in a continuous ripple of laughter, even when suffering acutely, as he often did, from an internal malady which caused the tears to run down his face. Gaultier-Garguille was hardly less popular, though in a different way. A Norman by birth, he could imitate the Gascon to perfection, and all his farcical characters were either witty or dryly humorous. His success was partly due to a pair of remarkably thin and bandy legs, though he was always glad to hide this defect under a robe, especially the stage robe of a king. By him were

composed nearly all the songs and prologues of the farces acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. These three farce-players were the firmest of friends.

Italian Players.

About 1601 a band of Italian players found favor at the court, playing at Fontainebleau before Henri IV, who placed at their disposal the Hôtel d'Argent, while Sully, as we learn from his memoirs, built a theatre for them in his château. They were decried and satirized by native actors, who nevertheless did not disdain to take a leaf out of their book, the farce-players wearing masks, except Gros-Guillaume, who whitened his face with flour. At the Théâtre du Marais, where, in default of such actors as the Turpulin troupe, farce was not specially attractive, characters borrowed from the Spaniards were added to the repertory.

Hardi.

In tragedy and comedy, the Théâtre du Marais was far ahead of its rival, largely due to the ability of Alexandre Hardi, who had recently come to Paris, seeking to effect some radical changes in the character of the French drama. Little is known of his early career, except that he was born in Paris in 1560, received what in those days was deemed a liberal education, and then went into the country as a strolling player.

Hardi was more or less a disciple of the non-classical drama from the moment he began to write. He concerned himself with action rather than narration, subor-

dinating everything to dramatic effect. He imported comic elements into the deepest tragedy, and he liked to carry on his dialogue in speeches of only a few lines each. He disregarded the unities of place and time to a greater extent than his predecessors, now shifting the scene of a piece from Athens to western Europe, and now causing a personage to pass from youth to old age in the interval between two acts. Above all, as though to show that such innovations were not of independent origin, the majority of his plays, while founded upon ancient history or legend, are filled with details borrowed from Spain. If so audacious a plagiarist had chanced to pay a visit to London at this time, when the gifts of Shakespeare were beginning to find their highest expression, the *Merchant of Venice* and *Hamlet,* with other pieces known to the patrons of the Blackfriars and Globe theatres, might have been transferred to the Paris stage as original French works.

In his enthusiasm for the new system, however, Hardi did not entirely abandon the old, and his theatre was less an imitation of the Spanish drama than an attempt to blend it with the French. That he exposed the stability of the established drama to a crucial test there can be no doubt; his writings brought fame and fortune to the Théâtre du Marais, and he was saluted on nearly all hands as a "Maitre." In truth, the new dramatist united a keen sense of stage effect to grandiloquence of language, and the audience was too much excited by his forcible situations to observe that he fell far below Garnier and Montchrétien in imagination, dignity and grace. His masterpiece, perhaps, was *Mariamne,* the first of

many adaptations to theatrical purposes of the narration in Josephus.

From this time Hardi exhibits a change for the worse. Beset by poverty, aware that the public liked novelty for its own sake, and finding that his name—for the names of authors were now given in the bills—insured success to anything he wrote, however trivial it might be, he took less and less pains with his work. He deliberately merged the poet and the artist in the playwright. He took incidents from various sources, huddled them together with no higher object than that of carrying away his audience, and tricked them off in verse written with fatal facility, most of his later pieces being composed and represented within a week. "Heaven be praised!" he would exclaim, "I can subordinate all loftier aspirations to the demands of my trade." By doing so, it seems, he put money in his purse; but the liberal fashion he had introduced was thereby brought into disrepute, at least with the more cultivated playgoers.

Viaud.

Before long a reaction became apparent. The works of four authors, not unworthy of the name of poets, appeared most simultaneously at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in support of the pre-Hardian drama. First in order of time was Theophile Viaud, the son of an advocate practicing at Bordeaux. At the age of twenty-six he threw off, among various kinds of verse, a *Pirame et Thisbé*, which not undeservedly took the town by storm. His connection with the stage, however, ended as soon as it

began. He courted notoriety by means of licentious verse, and for several months was banished from the country of his birth. But exile had little or no effect upon his future conduct. He was either the author or concerned in the authorship of the *Parnasse Satirique;* and the Parlement, deeming him guilty of lèse majesté, sentenced him to be burned alive in the Place de Grève. The culprit sought safety in flight, but was arrested in Picardy, immured in the Conciergerie, and told to prepare for the worst. The sentence, however, was executed only in effigy; for powerful influence being exerted in his favor, the Parlement, after a cruelly protracted deliberation, contented itself with sending him again into exile.

But the cause which Viaud had espoused did not suffer from want of adherents. The marquis de Racan, who, though ill-educated in early life, was no stranger to Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Pastor Fido,* gave to the world, in *Les Bergeries, ou Arthenice,* a pastoral marked by refinement, elegance and tenderness. Handsome Jean Gombaud, who had gained a footing at the court of Marie de Medicis by means of some verses on the death of her husband, became a rival of Racan on his own ground, and may well have succeeded in making him uneasy for his laurels. Then a bard of the mature age of sixteen, Jean Mairet, came forward with *Chriséide et Armand,* a tragi-comedy, and *La Silvie,* a tragi-comedy-pastoral. It did not require exceptional sagacity to perceive that the author of *La Silvie* would make a name for himself in the arena of letters.

Fortunately for the classicists, the school they warred

against was soon to lose its principal support. In 1623, placed above want by the proceeds of his work, "old Hardi," as he had come to be called, bade an informal farewell to the theatre, his last production being a pastoral entitled *Le Triomphe d'Amour*. By this time, according to his own confession, he had put together no fewer than six hundred plays, forty-one of which have come down to us. Hitherto, perhaps, his literary value has not been adequately recognized. He was persistently decried by those who rejected his dramatic theory; and the world at large, reluctant to believe that one who wrote so much could have written well, has adopted their estimate without taking the trouble to ascertain how far it is borne out by facts. His work in general is supposed to be loosely ordered, to abound in vulgar claptrap to the absolute exclusion of poetry, and to bear about the same relation to the best examples of the modern European drama as a gaudily colored print to a picture by Raphael or Leonardo. This impression will doubtless be modified if he is studied at first hand, for in most of his pieces there are really many exceedingly fine thoughts and phrases, as well as numerous bursts of passion.

The Classic and Romantic Schools.

Hardi's disappearance was followed by a sharp contest for supremacy between the classical and the romantic schools. Racan and Gombaud contented themselves with a single contribution to the stage; but Mairet, whose success had opened to him the doors of the most exclusive Parisian society, continued to labor with all the ardor of

youth, and was induced by the cardinal de la Valette and the comte de Carmail to pay more attention to unities of place and time. On the other hand, three authors of no inconsiderable merit threw the weight of their influence into the opposite scale. Balthasar Baro, formerly secretary to the marquis d'Urfé, whose *Astrée* he had recently completed, brought forth a poëme-heröique entitled *Celinde,* the personages of which relate in tragic form the story of Judith and Holofernes. Hardly less precocious than the author of *La Silvie,* Jean Rotrou, the youngest representative of one of the most ancient families at Dreux, was the next to enter the lists. At the age of nineteen he had the pleasure of seeing two of his pieces—*L'Hypocondriaque* and *La Bague de l'Oubli*—performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne with marked success. Based more or less on the model of Hardi, they yet presented evidence of original thought, if not of a natural talent for the drama.

Scudéri.

Conspicuous among the rivals of Rotrou was Georges de Scudéri, a dashing officer of the Guards. Descended from a good old Provençal family, he was born at Havre de Grâce in 1601, entered the army in his teens, and had already acquired some notoriety in the capital as a fine gentleman with a mania for collecting paintings, coins and tulips. Madeleine de Scudéri, his sister, had meanwhile made their name famous by writing short pieces of poetry; indeed, she was known as the "modern Sappho" and the "tenth muse." Pressed for money—

for his patrimony and his pay were not sufficient to gratify his expensive tastes—Georges turned his attention to the stage. His first attempt was *Ligdamon et Lidias,* a tragi-comedy, and in the preface thereto he poses before his readers as one writing simply for his own diversion. "The printers and the players," he says, "will bear witness that I have not sold what I might have expected them to buy." In all probability he had given away the piece on the understanding that it should be acted and otherwise published; but he certainly had no intention to go on writing for nothing, as may be inferred from the fact that, in order to keep his head above water, he prevented his sister, over whom he had a strong influence, from accepting three advantageous offers of marriage, compelled her to keep her study for a prescribed number of hours every day, and spent upon himself a considerable portion of the fruits of her partly enforced industry. Notwithstanding many defects, *Ligdamon et Lidias*, in which the example of Hardi is followed, and to which, we may suspect, Madeleine contributed some of the most graceful lines, was sufficiently well received to make the players look for other pieces from the "Sieur de Scudéri." The classicists, alive to the formidable nature of the opposition arrayed against them, manifested increased vigor; and Mairet, after distinguishing himself on the staff of the duc de Montmorenci in the war against the Huguenots, brought out a *Sophonisbe,* similar in structure and treatment to Trissino's tragedy of that name. In Mairet's drama as in Rucellai's *Rosmunda*, both typical Renaissance plays, real poetic sentiment is much less conspicuous than the arid ped-

antry and ostentatious scholarship which were still the characteristics of the classic drama in France.

Predominance of Classic Drama.

It soon became evident that the elder of the two schools was crushing its rival. Nearly every writer of tragedy evinced an increasing tendency to compose in conformity with the Aristotelian precepts, to present the most perfect symmetry of form, and generally to infuse a serene and lofty dignity. Except as regards theatrical effect, the practical value of which had been too conclusively shown to be overlooked, the theory and practice of Hardi were gradually abandoned. In comedy the dramatist enjoyed a little more freedom, but even here it was thought necessary to observe a code of laws by no means favorable to the display of humor and natural truth. Nor will this contraction of the scope and power of the drama be a matter of much surprise if the dominant spirit of the age is borne in mind. The reaction toward culture, which set in at the end of the wars, had not been productive of unmixed benefit. It had given rise to extremely artificial tastes among the leaders of Parisian society. The graceful triflings of a Voiture were accepted as poetry, the unreal shepherds and shepherdesses of Astrée as the quintessence of literary beauty. Moreover, it was the fashion to affect extreme delicacy of thought, sentiment and expression. The florid style, which Gongora introduced in Spain and Marini in Italy, had made its appearance in France, where it found a swarm of imitators. Even the language of passion and

the formulæ of politeness became a tissue of hyperbole, of trope and figure, of extravagant metaphor and emblem. In vain did Malherbe and Balzac plead for the use of French, pure and simple; intelligible speech was regarded as a distinctive mark of ill-breeding. It was the age of the princess—the age when elegant ladies, holding their receptions in bed, with their guests grouped about them, rapturously listened to conversation in which, as La Bruyère puts it, "a flight of rhetoric not very easy to understand was followed by something more obscure, to be outdone in its turn by enigma after enigma, each more difficult to understand than its predecessor, but all greeted with prolonged applause."

Nowhere did this transcendentalism flourish more than at the hotel—under the shadow of the Louvre—of the marquise de Rambouillet, the heroine of Racan's *Bergeries*. In the eyes of such over-refined society the Romanesque drama found little or no favor, and was decried as bizarre, inartistic, fit only for the common people. If, notwithstanding her decadence as a nation, Spain had begun to exert a moral and social influence in France, with an inclination in Paris to dress and swear in the most approved Castilian fashion, the name of Lopé de Vega was treated as synonymous with theatrical barbarism. The system he derided, with its studied regularity of form and elaborate declamation, was accounted as a triumph of good taste by the fashionable loungers at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who would doubtless have been more impressed by a hand-made cascade than a mountain torrent, by a finely laid out garden than the rugged grandeur of Swiss or Highland scenery. Moving among

the best company of the capital, Rotrou and others were insensibly induced to modify or lay aside the principles on which they had started, and the school of Jodelle slowly overbore its once powerful antagonist. Nevertheless, its supremacy was still far from being assured. It presented but few examples of exceptional merit, and was emasculated by an inclination among its poets to adopt the style of the précieuses, afterward ridiculed by Molière. Happily for its interests, though not, perhaps, for dramatic art, there was now to appear a writer who brought himself to accept its precepts, yet aimed at vigor rather than refinement, and who soon developed a genius rare enough to give him almost undisputed authority as a model for imitation.

Before passing in review the life and works of one who is commonly accepted as the greatest or among the greatest of French dramatists, due credit should be given to those who preceded him—to the age which began with Jodelle's *Cléopatre Captive*, in 1552, and continued throughout the century. Briefly summarized, this age includes the tragedies of Jodelle, La Péruse, Bounyn, Grevin, the brothers De la Taille, Monchrétien and Garnier. In comedy there are Belleau, a member of the Pleiad, who reproduced the swaggering captain of the Plautian comedy already approached by Jodelle. Grevin, Turnèbe, D'Amboise, Larivey and others copied or adapted to their comedies Italian manners, characters and intrigue, the last, as we have seen, openly professing to imitate the poets of Italy, his native land, translating almost literally from Dolce, Secchi and other Italian dramatists, while later, Molière, in his turn,

owed much to this lively and versatile author, and in this respect, too, his efforts met with much popular appreciation.

Before either tragedy or comedy entered upon the era when genius was to leave its impress with creations of undying merit, they had passed, with other branches of literature, through a new experience in the nation's annals. The turmoils and terrors of the great wars of the sixteenth century had been followed by a reaction toward culture and refinement, and Malherbe, the father of the French style, had set the seal on the results of the Renaissance. The people, meanwhile, continued to relieve their weariness by the aid of that half cynical gayety which, among the French, is ever to be found amid the darkest hours of their national life.

II.

Corneille and His Times.

Among the most faithful of the civil officers who served the French government at the opening of the seventeenth century was Maître Thomas Corneille, king's advocate and superintendent of forests and streams in the viscomté of Rouen. In the latter capacity he was often exposed to danger; for in the event of a famine visiting his province—a very common occurrence—the people would set all authority at defiance, hang the guardians of the peace, and plunder any building where food was to be had. In such emergencies Corneille acted with remarkable vigor and promptness, especially when a swarm of famishing peasants laid waste the forests of Roumaire and the adjoining country. His home was in the city of Rouen, where, in 1606, his wife gave birth to one of the greatest of French poets and dramatists, Pierre Corneille.

Youth of Corneille.

Pierre grew from infancy to manhood in the quaint, old-fashioned town which had witnessed the martyrdom of Jeanne d'Arc, then a little network of crooked and

narrow streets, lined with wooden houses, but dignified by the venerable cathedral erected in their midst. He was educated among the Jesuits, who desired to adopt him into their order; but in this they were disappointed, although he was of an austere and religious temperament. He appears to have been a diligent student; for there is still preserved a prize which he gained in his thirteenth year—a folio volume stamped in gold with the arms of the lieutenant-general of Normandy. His college days ended, Pierre began the study of law, and, through his father's influence, was admitted as an advocate four years before the usual time.

But Pierre Corneille was not destined for the bar. While practice and promotion came quickly enough, he was neither quick-witted nor ready of speech. Moreover, he felt that he was out of his element. What he liked best was to write poetry, and to this an imperious instinct urged him to apply himself with all the energies of a cultured and inventive genius. His earliest verses, it is said, were in the form of a tribute to a pretty neighbor, a Madame Dupont. Soon afterward, by the merest accident, his attention was turned to the drama. A young lady named Milet, who lived with her parents near the Corneille residence, was introduced by her accepted lover to the youthful poet, to whom she straightway transferred her affections; but Pierre, it seems, did not return them.

Mélite.

At this time it chanced that a troupe of strolling players, headed by Mondori, was performing at Rouen a

selection from Hardi's plays, and for them Corneille wrote his first comedy. Its title was *Mélite, ou les Fausses Lettres,* and its heroine the fickle Mlle. Milet. So well pleased was Mondori with the piece, that he took it to Paris, where it was performed at the Théâtre du Marais. Though hardly worthy of Corneille, it was well enough as a first effort, apart from the discourtesy—to use no harsher phrase—displayed in the selection of the theme. In some respects it was a surprise to the audience; for its author relied on character rather than caricature, on spirited dialogue rather than stale and stupid jest. Corneille himself afterward said that in writing it he had nothing to guide him but a little common sense and the example of Hardi; but he was certainly more indebted to the former than to the latter. At first *Mélite* was coldly received, but won favor with later performances, and presently became one of the stock pieces of the Théâtre du Marais.

Mondori.

Corneille's comedy brought more profit to Mondori than to himself. Instead of returning to the provinces, the latter became chief actor at the Théâtre du Marais, now transferred to a tennis court in the old Rue du Temple. Meanwhile the company had undergone many changes. Old faces had disappeared, and though the three farce-players were here, they had a formidable rival in Jodelet, who possessed a fund of the richest and broadest of humor. His face, it is said, was so comic that he had only to show himself on the stage to convulse the audience with laughter, and this was vastly intensified

by the questioning look of helpless amazement with which he regarded the spectators.

Under the leadership of Mondori, whose forte was tragedy, the Marais company far outdistanced its rivals. "This remarkable man," says one of his critics, "owed nothing to accident. Merit such as his would have been rewarded, in ancient days, with crowns and statues. No one ever appeared on the stage with more honor; for he showed himself to be thoroughly imbued with a sense of the grandeur of the passions which he represented. Endowed with the faculty of self-abandonment, he imprinted upon the mind the sentiments he expressed. His change of countenance seemed to come from the movements of his heart, and his elocution and gestures, too, were excellent." And the gifts thus cultivated were allied to physical advantages—a symmetrical figure, a majestic bearing and fine, expressive features.

Mairet and Durger.

The competition between the two theatres—the Marais and Hôtel de Bourgogne—now became very keen. Eight plays by the chief dramatists of the day were given in rapid succession. Mairet wrote *Antoine et Cleopatre* and *Soliman,* and Rotrou several others, among which was *Hercule Mourant.* Hastily written, these pieces, with the exception of the last, will not repay perusal. Nor were the actors content to rely exclusively upon established writers. Manuscripts which had been treated with indifference were eagerly read, and this was a time when young and unknown dramatists, if possessed of talent,

might be sure to find a hearing. Among others who did so were two of the literary toilers of Paris. One, named De Rayssiguier, a Languedocian, after being imprisoned for some months by Cardinal Richelieu, had come to Paris, partly to try his fortune with the pen, but chiefly in the hope of assuring his future by marriage with a wealthy lady. Both as a dramatist and fortune-hunter, however, he completely failed, and his last days seem to have been passed in extreme poverty. Duryer, the other new dramatist, had also reason to exclaim against fate. He began life under favorable auspices, belonged to a noble family, and through their influence had obtained the honorable but far from lucrative post of secrétaire du roi. In an evil hour he married a portionless girl, who presented him with seven children in about as many years. His family, disapproving of the match, entirely discarded him; and at length, reduced to want, he sold his office for a mere trifle, strove to earn a livelihood for himself and those dependent upon him by translating for booksellers, and turned his attention to the theatre. He resided at a little village a mile or two from Paris, and here, one bright summer afternoon, he was visited by Vigneul de Marville and one or two friends. "He received us," writes the annalist, "with delight, spoke to us of his plans for the future, and showed us his works. It touched us to find that, unashamed of his poverty, he wished to give us a collation. We sat down under a tree; a cloth was spread out on the grass, and while his wife brought us some milk, he procured some cherries, fresh water and brown bread. The repast seemed to us excellent, but we could not bid

our kind host adieu without being moved to see him so ill-treated by fortune." Better days, however, were in store for the struggling author, at this time only in his twenty-seventh year. His first play, a tragi-comedy called *Argenis et Poliarque,* was cordially received, and the duc de Vendome made him his secretary.

Clitandre.

Corneille, to whom this activity in the theatrical world was in a great measure due, produced at this time a tragi-comedy entitled *Clitandre.* Here, as in his first piece, he seemed more anxious to astonish than to interest his audience, though in a very different way. "During a journey which I made to Paris," he writes, "I perceived that *Mélite* was not in conformity with the time rule—the only rule then known. I heard, too, that my fellow-dramatists censured it as possessing too little effect, and the style as too familiar. In order to justify myself, and to show that this sort of play might be distinguished by true dramatic beauty, I undertook, in a spirit of bravado, to write one which should be in accordance with the twenty-four hours' regulation, full of incident, in a style more elevated, but generally worthless." In other words, he "wished to censure rather than comply with the tastes of the public." In the case of a rising dramatist such self-stultification is hardly credible, but the sincerity of Corneille is placed beyond doubt by the fact that *Clitandre,* unlike *Mélite,* is overcrowded with incidents and inflated in expression. By the force of contrast, it would seem, the audience were driven to the conclusion that the

author of *Mélite* was taking a wrong course, and that the sooner he returned to the path opened up by that comedy the better. The object with which *Clitandre* had been written, he tells us, "was completely attained."

Boisrobert.

Jealous of the honors already gained by the young Rouen lawyer, a hanger-on at the Palais Cardinal, the abbé François de Boisrobert, proceeded to measure his strength against him in dramatic writing.

Lettered Paris may well have been on the tip-toe of expectation as to the result. The abbé was not only the inseparable companion of the all-powerful Richelieu, but had the reputation of being the most amusing talker in the capital. In early life, during a visit to Rome, his facility in this respect commended him to the notice of pope Urban VIII, who besought him to enter the Church. The young man's parents had intended him for the law, and his tastes did not incline to the ecclesiastical profession; but the prospect opened up to him by the personal good-will of the pope was too alluring to be resisted; he promptly qualified himself for holy orders, and was made canon at Rouen. Nearly the whole of Boisrobert's time, however, was spent in Paris, where, thanks to his gayety and humor, he was admitted to the choicest society. At the Palais Cardinal he quickly established a firm footing, and none of the festive gatherings there were deemed complete without him. No one could more effectually make Richelieu throw off the cares of state than this worldly-minded abbé. "Monseigneur," said a physician

to the great cardinal, "we do all we can for you, but our drugs are useless unless you mix them with a dram or two of Boisrobert." Richelieu was not wanting in gratitude; the abbé received at his hands the titles of king's almoner and councillor of state, letters of nobility, and, as more substantial gifts, the abbey of Chatillon-sur-Seine and the priory of Ferté-sur-Aube. Boisrobert was now forty years of age, but neither the effects of time nor the nature of his calling appears to have had the slightest effect upon his mode of living. He was always to be found at the Palais Cardinal, the theatre or the gaming-table; for he never permitted his sacerdotal obligations to interfere with his pleasures. He once found a man dying in the street from wounds received in a duel, and therefore in urgent need of the consolations of religion. But Boisrobert was on the way to a fashionable gathering; so, briefly enjoining the victim to "think of God and say his Benedicite," he hurried on. In a few short intervals of solitude he composed a tragi-comedy on the story of Pirandre and Lisimène; and the result, if not equal to his own expectations, was such as to encourage him to take up the pen again.

Corneille's Comedies.

Three comedies by Corneille—*La Veuve, La Galérie du Palais* and *La Suivante*—next demand our attention. The first, though somewhat weak, won high praise, especially from Scudéri and Mairet. "Le soleil est levé," exclaimed the former; "retirez-vous étoiles!" It is worthy of note that the action of *La Veuve* is spread over

four days. "I have sought," the author writes, "to find a mean between the severity of the rules and the liberty which is only too common on the French stage; the first is rarely capable of good effects." By *La Galérie du Palais* a much-needed reform was accomplished. Many young and sprightly women now graced the boards, and Corneille, having need of a servant in the piece, substituted for the common nurse a sort of soubrette. The change was hailed by all thinking persons as for the better, and before long the obnoxious character became a thing of the past. *La Suivante,* while pleasantly written, is disfigured by more than one grave defect. The whole of the plot is made to turn upon a character in itself not very strong—that of a rather commonplace soubrette—Corneille appearing, in this instance, to have lost sight of the principles of dramatic effect. Moreover, he permitted himself to fall into a species of affectation. The five acts into which the piece is divided are of exactly the same length, and in one scene the characters speak only one line at a time.

Gros-Guillaume and His Friends.

The Hôtel de Bourgogne, the theatre in which these pieces were produced, was now to lose the three farceurs who had so long upheld its fortunes. Gros-Guillaume, it would appear, had the hardihood to caricature on the stage some exceedingly unpopular magistrates. The player paid dearly for the applause which greeted the performance, for he was arrested behind the scenes, hurried into a coach, and conveyed to the Conciergerie.

This measure had a far more serious result than even the offended magistrates could have wished. The loss of his liberty, joined to painful misgivings as to the results of his imprudence, preyed so much on the prisoner's mind that he died. Gaultier-Garguille and Turlupin took their loss so grievously to heart that it is hardly too much to say they never held up their heads again. Nor will their grief seem unnatural or excessive, when it is remembered that since youth they had been associated with Gros-Guillaume on the stage, and had always been united to him by ties of the closest friendship. Far advanced in years, they were unable to withstand so heavy a blow, and in less than a week after Gros-Guillaume died, his old comrades had both joined him in the grave. In death, as in life, the three farceurs were inseparable.

Jodelet and Harduin.

The void thus caused in the theatre was filled up in a most unexpected way. Louis XIII ordered six members of the Marais company, including Jodelet, to transfer their services to the Hôtel de Bourgogne, in the prosperity of which he appears to have taken much interest. Jodelet was still popular, but Bellerose, anxious to make his company as strong as possible in comedy, engaged, as an additional attraction, one Bertrand Harduin de St. Jacques. The newcomer had no experience on the stage. Educated for the medical profession, he had, in some wild freak, run away from home, and had since gained a precarious livelihood with a band of peripatetic quack doctors by expatiating in public upon the mar-

vellous qualities of their nostrums. Thus he had acquired a certain readiness of wit and power of repartee. Suddenly, by favor of Bellerose, he was transformed into a comedian at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where, probably out of deference to his family, who were well connected, he took the name of Guillet-Gorju. The manager's faith in him was abundantly justified; the confidence to face an audience was already his, and in a short time he so far mastered the technicalities of the stage as to bring into effective play a fine sense of humor.

Place Royale.

Of the new plays, the most important was Corneille's *Place Royale,* in many respects a clever production, but now remembered chiefly by reason of an idle charge brought against the author. M. Clavaret, an advocate of Orleans, had abandoned the law for the drama, and by some unexplained means had just brought out a piece bearing the same name before the king at Forges. No sooner did the second *Place Royale* appear than he accused Corneille, with whom, it appears, he was slightly acquainted, of writing it for no other purpose than to expose a rival to damaging comparisons. "Had you," he says, "been able to rise superior to a wish to overshadow me, you would have given your *Place Royale* another name. From the time you knew I was treating this subject you resolved to appropriate it, either to gratify your jealousy or to please the actors you serve." Corneille, however, had no reason to be afraid of Clavaret, and it is significant that the *Place Royale* of the

latter, although it had "the good fortune of pleasing the king," was never printed.

Richelieu as a Dramatist.

About this time the illustrious statesman who shaped the destinies of the country makes his appearance on the stage. The character of Richelieu presents an almost unique combination of strength and weakness, of great ideas and petty foibles. In all the stupendous tasks he had undertaken—in the extinction of the Huguenots as a political element, in the conversion of the old feudal confederacy into an absolute monarchy, and in the elevation of France in the scale of nations at the expense of what had long been the preponderating power in Europe—he triumphed by the sheer force of a vigorous intellect, sustained by high moral courage and unfaltering determination. His mind once made up, he went straight to his object, now eking out the lion's skin with the fox's, anon striking with a hand of iron those who barred his way, and finally, as he is himself reported to have said, "covering up all with his red cassock." Surrounded by avowed or secret enemies, the more numerous and hopeful on account of the vacillation of the king, he lived in a state of constant peril from their machinations, but succeeded in keeping them at bay. Nor was this all; the armor of the warrior could at times be seen through the robe of the cardinal, and his formation of the Académie Française was largely due to an enlightened faith in the importance of learning. The international fame which he won as a statesman was not

enough for Richelieu. Yielding to the impulses of a morbid self-esteem, he wished to shine in other ways. He affected to be versed in Hebrew and Arabic. He posed at the Hôtel de Rambouillet as a metaphysician by discussing theses of love. Covetous of literary distinction, he composed "beaux livres de devotion," and would have given much to be the author of a good play. He was not even exempt from purely personal vanity; occasionally, in order to set off the shapeliness of his figure to the best advantage, he would present himself to the ladies of his acquaintance—the more readily if Marion Delorme happened to be among them—in the guise of a young and seductive cavalier.

The Five Poets.

The cardinal's taste for dramatic work now assumed unexpected prominence. He engaged a staff of poets to assist him in writing a comedy. First was the lively Boisrobert, who, it need hardly be said, accepted the invitation with alacrity. Next came Guillaume Colletet, an avocat au Parlement, but with a greater predilection for verse-making than law. The third author, Claude de L'Étoile, son of the annalist, was blessed with creative fancy and a small fortune, and might have made a name for himself if he had not frittered away his time and energy in pleasure. His judgment was held in high respect at the Palais Cardinal, although he often displeased his eminence by ridiculing the supposed necessity of rhyme. The other poets selected were Corneille and Rotrou, the former of whom prob-

ably owed the honor less to an appreciation of his excellence as a dramatist than to the fact that he had written some graceful lines of welcome to Richelieu and Louis XIII when, in the previous year, they paid a formal visit to Rouen. The staff thus completed, it was arranged that their works should be played at the Palais Cardinal, in a salon set apart and fitted up for that purpose.

In receipt of a pension from Richelieu, whom they termed their maître, the "Cinq Auteurs," as they were called, produced a comedy entitled *Les Tuileries*. The groundwork was supplied by the cardinal, and each of his poets, by arrangement among themselves, wrote a particular act. Colletet took charge of the monologue, with certain lines of which Richelieu was so well pleased that he presented the author with fifty pistoles. "Understand," he said in doing so, "that this is only for these lines; the king is not rich enough to permit of my paying for the rest."

Les Tuileries.

The cardinal himself wrote the prologue, but at the last moment, not being pleased with it, he induced Chapelain, in consideration of a liberal gift, to stand forward as its author. Finally *Les Tuileries* was represented before the king and his court, the Cinq Auteurs, who were so pointedly eulogized in the prologue that for a moment every eye must have been directed toward them, occupying seats in the best part of the salle. How the piece was received we are not told, but that it fell short of even reasonable expectation can hardly be questioned.

The next piece composed by the Cinq Auteurs was *L'Aveugle de Smyrne,* and after its completion Corneille withdrew from the cardinal's service. The pride and exultation with which he entered upon his task had given place to very different feelings. Richelieu, as may be supposed, did not prove a genial collaborateur. He regarded the five poets merely as tools, and so treated them that they could not help being aware of the fact. It is true that he permitted them to criticise his suggestions, but he was in no wise disposed to consider their advice as to his own part of the work, which was the plot, never supposing that any of the poets would venture on such a liberty. Not realizing the extent of Richelieu's amour propre, and anxious that all parts of the comedy should hang well together, Corneille made a trifling change in the groundwork of the act intrusted to him. The cardinal's resentment knew no bounds. He angrily told the presumptuous poet that, if he wished to remain at the Palais Cardinal, he must have more esprit de suite—in other words, must submit to the will of his superior. The condition was one to which Corneille would not consent, and after finishing his share of the work on *L'Aveugle de Smyrne,* he suddenly discovered that urgent business required his presence at Rouen.

Medée and Illusion.

During his servitude at the Palais Cardinal, Corneille had found time for other work, and before leaving Paris two more plays from his hand were brought out at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The first was *Medée,* avowedly an

imitation of Seneca's tragedy on that subject, and in this, as has well been said, "was announced the Corneille of the future." *L'Illusion,* the second piece, did not sustain the fame achieved by Corneille's other comedies. In both plot and character it is singularly bizarre, with but slight charm of style. "If," writes one of Corneille's biographers, "I dare to say what I think of it, its failure was great." It is probable that he would not have thought or said as much if the dramatist himself had not described the play as a "galanterie extravagante unworthy of consideration."

Back again at Rouen, Corneille resumed his practice as an advocate, but gave most of his time and thoughts to the study of dramatic art. The affront put upon him by the cardinal rankled in his mind, and he determined to take revenge by producing a work superior to anything that had thus far come from his pen. By good fortune he became acquainted at this time with one M. de Chalon, formerly secretary to Marie de Medicis, and now living in retirement at Rouen. His opinions as to stage matters were not to be despised; he had been a constant playgoer in Paris, and was well read in Spanish dramatic literature. "Monsieur Corneille," he once said, "your comedies, it must be admitted, are full of spirit; but permit me to say that the track you are pursuing is unworthy of your talents. By adhering to it you will acquire only an ephemeral reputation. In the Spanish drama there are subjects which, treated in our taste and by a mind such as yours, would produce great effect. The language is not a difficult one; set about learning it, and you shall have all the assistance I can render."

Corneille eagerly accepted the offer, and his friend did not fail to keep his word. The effect of this acceptance upon the author's style soon became manifest.

Study of Lopé de Vega.

Applying himself earnestly to his Spanish studies, the poet found himself in what he must have regarded as a new world. Lopé de Vega, now on the point of death, had created a drama singularly rich in incident, shot through with many golden threads of poetry, and in complete harmony with the spirit of the nation to which he belonged. In the first of these qualities, as we have seen, his work is particularly effective. It abounds in surprises, imbroglios, duels, assassinations, disguises, wild adventures, hair-breadth escapes, lovers' stratagems, midnight assignations and sharp conflicts between antagonistic passions and interests. The actors who represented it were obliged to lay in a large store of masks, dark lanterns, sliding panels, trap-doors and rope ladders. Nevertheless, it never assumes the ordinary melodramatic aspect, while in the most prosaic examples there are many fine bursts of passion, many gleams of pure tenderness, many animated expressions of chivalric sentiment. Above all, it was the only drama which at that time possessed a distinctively national character. It always breathes, whatever the subject may be, the spirit of the typical Spaniard—a man fully contained within himself, devout even to superstition, quick to resent injury, unostentatiously enthusiastic, intensely proud of the past greatness of his country, ever disposed to lend

an ear to the story of romantic adventure, morbidly keen upon all points of personal honor.

The Cid.

Las Mocedades del Cid, a tragi-comedy by Guillen de Castro, the friend and rival of Lopé, fixed itself more firmly in Corneille's mind than anything else. Nor is this a matter of surprise. The name of the chief character is alone sufficient to give a special interest to the piece. Both history and romance, the latter especially, describe Roderigo Diaz de Bovar, usually called the Cid, as the most prominent Spaniard of the heroic period, as a pattern of knightly virtue and grace. His valor was equalled only by his wisdom, generosity and forbearance. More than five centuries had passed away since his death; but even now, at a time when mediæval ideas and institutions seemed to belong to a more or less remote past, the fame of his prowess exerted an inspiring influence, not only in Spain, but throughout western Europe. The mere perusal of *Las Mocedades del Cid,* it would seem, was enough to induce Corneille to try his powers on the same subject. He had a keen sympathy with the chivalric spirit, and it did not require a dramatist of his talent and experience to see that the conflict between love and duty in the minds of the hero and heroine would, if impressively treated, take an audience by storm. Before long he sat down to write *Le Cid,* striving to adapt the incidents to the requirements of the classical stage without losing their essential significance, and drawing from the old romances concerning Roder-

igo any details that might add to the force of the picture.

Calprenède, Benserade and Desmarets.

While Corneille was at work upon this play, the dramatic world in Paris showed abnormal activity. Novelty followed novelty at very brief intervals, and the brains of the players must have been almost turned by the number of speeches they had to learn. Mairet, Rotrou, Scuderi and Duryer frequently presented their pieces to the audience, but to comparatively little purpose. From half a dozen pieces by Rotrou, only one, *Les Sosies,* a free and somewhat piquant version of the Roman *Amphitryon,* was in any sense worthy of him. In sheer desperation, the leaders of the two companies allowed several untried authors to have a hearing. The first one, named Charles Beys, it is clear, had no special talent for the drama. The same remark may be applied to Calprenède, a young Gascon, who had arrived in Paris four years previously, become a cadet in the Guards, and ingratiated himself with the queen by reason of some cleverness as a story-teller. His literary reputation, such as it was, depended almost exclusively upon a few heroic romances which were greatly admired at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Of Calprenède's irascibility many instances are given. On one occasion, Richelieu, being asked by him to pronounce an opinion on some of his plays, said he thought the lines "laches." "Cadédis!" he hotly exclaimed, clapping his hand upon his sword, "comment laches?" His eminence did not deign to notice the thoughtless movement; at all events, the Gas-

con was not sent to cool his temper within the walls of the Bastille. Another candidate was Benserade, who belonged to a good family in Normandy, had been educated for the church, and was now sowing his wild oats in the capital. A passion for Madame Bellerose led him in the first instance to write for the theatre, where he found himself completely out of his element. Soon he gave up all thoughts of the ecclesiastical profession, and Richelieu, to whom he was related, thereupon accorded him a pension. Desmarets also owed much to Richelieu, who granted him several lucrative positions and also induced him to write for the stage, though he met with little success. The last one to be noticed is Alibrai, whose career was somewhat unsavory. A brother of Madame de Sainctot, he might have done well in life, but soon became a notorious sot. "I have at least made myself famous in the cabarets," he wrote, in answer to a hint that he had not turned his gifts and opportunities to account. He certainly did not make himself famous as a dramatist.

Tristan and His Mariamne.

The Cid was finished; and Corneille, doubtless rich in hope, brought the manuscript to Paris. He had no choice but to leave it at the Hôtel de Bourgogne or consent to delay, for at the other theatre Mondori was drawing what proved a veritable prize in the dramatic lottery. This was a tragedy by François Tristan, called *Mariamne,* in many respects a remarkable work. The interest usually excited by the announcement of a new play was deepened in this instance by the reputation of the

author. Tristan, now thirty-five years of age, was descended, if we may believe his own statement, from Peter the Hermit, and numbered among his ancestors the terrible grand-prévôt of Louis XI. In early life he found an influential friend in the marquis de Verneuil, but soon afterward he had the misfortune to kill a garde-du-corps in a duel, and as the edicts against duelling had not fallen into abeyance, he deemed it prudent to take refuge in England. His resources failing, he set forth for Spain, there to place himself under the protection of a relative, Juan de Velasquez. Crossing the channel in a fishing-boat, he started south on foot. In Poitou, coming to his last coin, he had recourse to Scévole de Sainte Marthe, who, struck by the refined manners of the tramp, received him as a favored guest, made him give up the idea of going to Spain, and procured for him the post of secretary to the marquis de Villars-Montpezat. The cloud which had so long hung over his prospects now passed away. Having accompanied the marquis to Bordeaux, where the court then happened to be, he was introduced to the king and informally absolved from his offense. We next find him in Paris, nominally as gentleman-in-ordinary to Gaston d'Orleans, but devoting the whole of his time to gambling, gallantry and tragedy-writing. It would seem that, while in London, he had been prevented by poverty, or an imperfect acquaintance with the English language, from paying many visits to its theatres; for no trace of English inspiration can be detected in anything he wrote. His first play, *Mariamne,* imitated from Calderon's *Tetrarca de Jerusalem,* proved extremely successful, though less

by reason of its merits than for Mondori's powerful impersonation of Herod. According to Père Rapin, the audience was so affected that they "dispersed with a preoccupied air, an effect similar to that produced by the great Greek tragedies on the Athenians of old."

Success of the Cid.

Desirous, probably, of matching himself against the new luminary while *Mariamne* was in the full tide of its popularity, Corneille brought out *Le Cid* as the year 1637 drew to a close. His confidence in its success was more than justified by the result. In regard to the plot, the piece labored under a serious disadvantage. The marriage of a woman to one at whose hands her father had met his death, albeit in an honorable duel, must have been deemed a repulsive incident; and the dramatist, instead of softening the repulsiveness by spreading the action over a number of years, in which the healing influence of time might have been exercised, had thought fit to construct the piece in compliance with the twenty-four-hour rule. In the space of one day, therefore, Chimène rises to the full consciousness of her attachment to Rodrigue, discovers that he has shed her father's blood, passionately exhorts the king to punish him with death, and then consents to accept his hand in marriage. But the defects of *The Cid* were far outweighed by its merits. The double strife between love and duty was depicted with matchless force and sympathy; the haughty spirit of the great vassals of mediæval Spain shone forth in all its energy; imaginative

power, vivid portraiture of character, glowing energy of thought and expression—nothing seemed wanting. The effect of such a play at a time when the romantic spirit had not died away may well be conceived. The audience were worked up to something like a frenzy of admiration, and the curtain fell upon by far the greatest triumph yet achieved on the French stage.

Nor was that triumph ephemeral. *Le Cid* had what was then thought a long run. From one end of Paris to the other it formed the chief subject of discussion. Men who cared nothing for the theatre and its works were induced to share in the sorrows of Rodrigue and Chimène. Parents taught their children to recite the most striking passages and "Beautiful as the Cid" became a familiar proverb. Richelieu's niece, Madame de Combalet, to whom the play was dedicated, probably in return for some kindness she had shown the author at the Palais Cardinal, became a sort of heroine in public estimation. The court, it would seem, was not behind the town in showing its approbation. The tragedy was thrice represented at the Louvre, and Louis XIII and his queen personally complimented the poet upon his work. Corneille the elder was granted letters of nobility, nominally in recognition of the energy and decision he had displayed in the discharge of his official duties, but really because he was the father of the author of *Le Cid*. Nor was the reputation of the play confined to France. "The Cid, translated and slightly altered by Joseph Rutter," tutor in the family of Lord Dorset, was represented before the English court at Whitehall, and soon afterward at the Cockpit in Drury Lane. King

Charles himself requested the author to publish his adaptation. Madrid, too, brought *Le Cid* upon the stage, and, as at the outset Corneille had frankly acknowledged that he was indebted to the play of Guillen de Castro for the essence of his plot—and this was the full extent of his obligation—the Spaniards had reason to credit him with honorable candor as well as dramatic genius. We may suspect, however, that the gravest Spaniards must have given way to merriment when they found that the scene was laid at Seville, a city which for two centuries after the time in question remained in the hands of the Moors. Certainly Corneille was not very well versed in Spanish history, however familiar he might be with the old chronicles relating to his hero. Before long, it may be added, *Le Cid* was translated into every European language, an honor entirely without precedent.

Popularity of Corneille.

Parisian society was not backward in doing homage to the man who had written *Le Cid*. He was sought after, admitted to the most exclusive salons, and fairly surfeited with adulation. The shadowy figure of the author of *Mélite* and *L'Illusion* is thrown into clear relief by the light now shed upon it. Those who had never seen him before must have gazed upon him with mild astonishment on his first introduction among them. In all probability they had pictured him to themselves as a poet à la Scudéri—a cavalier of agreeable presence, courtly manners and sprightly conversation. On the

contrary, they found before them a man of less than medium stature, dignified, indeed, by a fine intellectual countenance, but awkward in demeanor, inelegant in speech, slovenly in dress and somewhat morose in temper. Vigneul-Marville took him at first to be a tradesman, while a lady of high degree declared that, for his own sake, he should never be heard except at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Nor was he at pains to correct his defects. "I am not the less for that Pierre Corneille," he would say to those who ventured to hint at them. The self-contentment displayed in this remark frequently led him to recite at the Hôtel de Rambouillet some of the best scenes of his plays, although he must have seen that by doing so he fatigued rather than gratified his hearers. "Cadédis!" exclaimed Boisrobert, being reproached by Corneille for having decried one of his earlier pieces at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, "did I not applaud it when you blurted it out in my presence?" But much was forgiven the "grand Corneille," as from this time he seems to have been called. In addition to having written *Le Cid*, he was of good birth and education, and some of the butterflies among whom he moved may have been kind enough to suggest that the city in which he had passed his early days was as yet without the pale of Parisian influence. Had the tone aimed at in the salons been less artificial, the dramatist would doubtless have appeared in them to better advantage. Nothing like awkward constraint was apparent in his demeanor when he found himself among chosen friends, such as Rotrou and Pelisson. In a discussion with them his ungainliness disappeared; his dark eyes acquired a

new force of expression, and a brusque humor peculiar to himself gave point and pungency to what he said. It was easy at such times to perceive that to bluntness of manner and speech he united many high qualities—a humane disposition, a proudly independent spirit, a strong reverence for all that is really great and good. But his claim to honors became a matter of dispute. Every envious dramatist in the town endeavored to ridicule *Le Cid*, and, for their own sakes, to reverse the popular verdict.

His triumph assured, Corneille returned to Rouen, to be received there with pride and pleasure by his ennobled father, by the genial old M. de Chalons, by the demoiselle whose fickleness had caused him to turn his attention to the theatre, and by many of his fellow-citizens. The selection of subjects for his next plays must have cost him much anxious thought; for the eyes of France were upon him, and to realize the expectations he had raised, it was necessary to surpass his former works. His sympathies really lay with the picturesque scenes and characters of the middle ages, but it was more than probable that, if he utilized one of them, Scudéri and his tribe would accuse him of availing himself of a Spanish plot without acknowledgment. Anxious to prove that the invention of a plot was not above his capacity, he finally turned his attention to the history and legends of antiquity. In this well-trodden field he found several themes which, in addition to being susceptible of effective treatment, had not yet been touched by French dramatists—the contest between the Horatii and the Curiatii, the conspiracy of

Cinna against Augustus, the martyrdom of Polyeuctes and the death of Pompey. Nevertheless, he did not entirely abandon his Spanish studies.

Successes and Failures.

The Cid was followed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne by Rotrou's tragi-comedy, *Laure Persécutée*, in which a story akin to that of Inez de Castro is told with a force not previously displayed by his same pen. Even thus early, it would seem, the success of Corneille was tending to stimulate the ambition of his talented friend. Mairet, intimidated rather than spurred to fresh exertion, was represented by *L'Illustre Corsaire* and *Sidonie*, and Calprenède by a tragedy on the fate of the nine-days' queen, *Jeanne d'Angleterre*. Then came two untried dramatists—Guérin de Bouscal and Desfontaines, the latter a man of letters pure and simple. The former was less successful than the latter, though superior to him in art and taste. Tristan, anxious to confirm the advantage he had won by *Mariamne*, took to the Marais his tragedy of *Panthée*, the leading character of which had been written for Mondori. A cruel disappointment was in store for him. During a performance of *Herod*, Mondori was seized with apoplexy, and as symptoms of paralysis followed, the doctors ordered him to take a long rest. Tristan, too impatient to await the actor's recovery, transferred the chief part in *Panthée* to another member of the company, in whose hands it created so little effect that the play was a failure. Duryer contributed his *Lucrèce*,

which is valuable only as showing the degradation into which the drama sometimes fell at this period. Poignard in hand, Sextus attempts to execute his nefarious purpose; Lucrèce rushes away; her persecutor follows; faint cries are heard behind the scenes, and the heroine reappears with a significant speech in her mouth.

Chevreau.

The vitality of *The Cid* was now to be illustrated in a manner which Corneille could not have approved. The salons had just discovered, as they thought, a youthful prodigy in the person of Urbain Chevreau, son of an advocate in Poitou. Not yet twenty-four years of age, he was versed in many languages, had thrown off poetry and romance, and was engaged upon nothing less than a history of the world. Even this task, however, was not so formidable as the one to which he now addressed himself. With amusing temerity and self-confidence, he produced *La Suite et le Mariage du Cid* as a continuation of Corneille's play. The Infanta, actuated by jealousy, opposes the union of the lovers, but Rodrigue, after being arrested on suspicion of daring to look with eyes of affection on that royal lady, becomes the husband of Chimène in reward for another victory gained over the Moors. To make things still more pleasant for the young couple, the princess becomes engaged to marry a king. Though the comparison with Corneille must have told severely against the play, it was several times repeated, the author bringing out two others, in one of which this

world's historian introduces Tarquin as a Roman emperor!

Les Visionnaires.

Soon afterward *L'Aveugle de Smyrne*, concocted by the Cinq Auteurs, was played at the Palais Cardinal, the interest being greatly increased by the appearance of Mondori as the hero. But this favorite actor broke down in the middle of the performance, and his part was finished by a substitute. In any event, it would not have succeeded, and, with *Les Tuileries*, served to show that the five poets, though all were good in their special line, could not work well together. Thereupon Richelieu determined that, in future, his plays should be written by a single dramatist, selecting for this purpose Desmarets. As the result, the comedy of *Les Visionnaires* was brought out at the hôtel de Bourgogne. Under a thin disguise, many prominent figures in French Society are brought on the stage, Madame de Sablé, for instance, who allowed the cardinal to believe that if she kept him at arm's length, her heart was really his, being introduced as a girl enamored of Alexander the Great. The comedy was received with a mixture of applause and derisive laughter, the latter predominating; for the public were in no kindly mood toward Desmarets, whom they termed "the first clerk in the department of poetic affairs at the Palais Cardinal."

After this failure, Richelieu took Scudéri under his patronage, ordering Sarrazin, one of the foremost of critics, to prepare an essay extolling him as the greatest

dramatic poet of the age. But a new tragi-comedy by Scudéri, entitled *L'Amour Tyranique*, met with only temporary success, for it was intrinsically worthless. Moreover, several productions of real merit appeared about the same time, especially Rotrou's *Captifs*, a clever imitation of Plautus. Above all, Corneille had again appeared on the stage, and strive as he would to influence fashion in favor of some other poet, Richelieu could not contend against public opinion.

Corneille's Horace.

The first of the tragedies written by Corneille at Rouen was *Horace*, which was produced at the Hôtel de Bourgogne early in 1639. In vain did the hangers-on at the Palais Cardinal try to prevent, or at least to qualify, its success; their efforts were thrown away and they could not themselves resist the spell thrown over the audience by this masterpiece of tragic composition. Extremely impressive was the figure of the father of the Horatii, as acted by Bellerose, who seemed to concentrate in himself all the grandeur of the Roman character. Intensely pathetic is the struggle between love for his children and the feeling of patriotism to which it yields, and not less so the parting from his son and the affianced lover of his daughter, who were soon to meet in deadly strife. But the master-stroke was in the scene where, after cursing the son who had fled, as he thought, when his brothers were slain at the first encounter, the father is asked, "What would you have him do against three?" "Die!" he exclaims — "Qu'il

mourût"—these words being greeted with a thunder of applause such as had never been heard within the walls of the theatre. It is almost unnecessary to add that the success of *Horace* exceeded the highest expectations of the author and his friends, while Sarrazin's eulogy of Scudéri became the laughing-stock of Paris.

The first two scenes are taken up with plaints and wailings, for whichever side gains the victory, the result will be disastrous to the personages of the story. Sabina, an Alban woman by birth, but married to Horatius, a Roman, thus bitterly laments her fate:

Sabina.—I am Roman, alas! because Horatius is Roman; I received the title when I accepted his hand. But this tie would make me a slave indeed, if it shut out from my heart my own country. Alba, where I first saw the light of day—Alba, my first love, the place of my birth—when I see war break out between us and thee, I dread our victory, even as I dread our loss. And Rome, if thou upbraid'st me that I am treacherous to thy cause, let thy enemies be such as I can hate. When I see from thy walls their army and ours—my husband on this side, and my three brothers on that—how can I without impiety importune heaven for thy happiness?

Still addressing Rome, she continues:

Sabina.—Go push your successes in the East; go to the Rhine, and set your flag upon its banks. Let the columns of Hercules tremble at thy approach: but spare the town where Romulus was born. Recollect, ungrateful city, that thou owest thine own existence, thy walls, and thy first laws, to the blood of her kings. Alba is thy origin. Stay, therefore, and consider before thou drive thy sword into thy mother's breast.

To whichever side the victory falls, the defeat to her will be terrible. The conquerors will have no further obstacle to their ambition, and the vanquished will be without hope; and as for the unhappy Sabina, she will have only tears for the conquered, and for the conquerors hatred.

When she leaves the stage, Camilla, the sister of Horatius, appears in her place. Julia, a Roman lady, is the confidante both of Sabina and Camilla, and to her ear their pathetic lamentations on either side are addressed. Camilla, as well as Sabina, is in despair at the thought of the coming war. She, a daughter of Rome, is betrothed to Curiatius, one of the noblest sons of Alba, and her position is identical with that of Sabina, except that she is not yet actually married. Her three brothers are all in the Roman army, fighting against Alba, as the three brothers of Sabina are in the Alban army. Julia tells Camilla that her grief ought not to be so deep as that of Sabina, for she is not as yet married. "One may change one's lover," she says, "but not one's husband. Put Curiatius out of your mind, and think of Valerius. You will then have nothing to fear from the enemy. You will be altogether upon our side, and no longer troubled by anxious cares. The idea of breaking her faith with a man she loves is horrible to Camilla; she will not listen to it for a moment, and thus declares herself:

Camilla.—I met Valerius, and, against his wont, he displeased me not. He spoke to me of love, and I listened to him, not perceiving that it was he who spoke. I showed him neither coldness nor disdain. Curiatius seemed to stand be-

fore me. All that I heard told me of his love, and all that I said assured him of mine. But to-day everything hangs upon the hazards of the fight. When yesterday I learnt the news, I scarcely noted it; my heart, charmed with the thoughts of wedlock and of peace, cast off all fatal forebodings. Night has dispelled that sweet delusion; a thousand horrid visions, a thousand images of blood, or rather a thousand heaps of carnage and of slaughter, tore from me my joy, and brought back my tears. I saw blood, and the dead, and nothing more; each spectre, as it came before me, remained but for a moment. They crowded in one upon the other, and the confusion added a double terror to my dream.

After this description, Curiatius suddenly appears, and speaks to Camilla enigmatically of peace which is to be purchased by an expedient heretofore unthought of. He describes to her how two contending armies had been marshalled into position facing each other, ready for the signal of attack, when the Alban dictator came forward between them and proposed terms. The dictator described the misery that must follow a war in which members of the same family would be fighting against each other. Their common enemies, he says, are looking with satisfaction at the discord between them. Why should they weaken their forces by a civil war, in which the slaughter of the conquered would only weaken the conquerors? But if they must fight among themselves, let certain champions on each side be chosen, and let the issue be decided by them. The side which is proved to be weakest shall henceforward yield to the strongest. But no indignity shall be imposed; slavery shall not be inflicted, nor shall tribute be enacted. Curiatius tells Camilla that when the dictator

had spoken, each party rushed into the other's arms with many signs of joy. It was then determined to select three men from each side. The choice had not yet been made, but in two hours' time the chosen warriors should be prepared to fight.

At the commencement of the second act we learn that Horatius and his two brothers have been chosen on the side of Rome. Horatius and Curiatius appear on the stage together, and after a scene of mutual compliments, Flavianus, a soldier in the Alban army, comes in to announce that Curiatius and his two brothers have been chosen to fight on the side of Alba. He takes his leave, and the two chosen warriors are again left alone together. There is a moment in which the two champions stand aghast, as if a gulf had suddenly opened between them. Then Curiatius gives vent to the first wild horror of dismay in broken exclamations which finely express the confusion of a mind suddenly overwhelmed by a terrible and unalterable fate:

Curiatius.—From this time forth let heaven, and hell, and earth unite their rage against us! Let men, gods, demons, and fate herself, combine to do their worst. Their utmost cruelty, their most dread enmity, are less terrible than the honor thus vouchsafed us.

Horatius is more self-possessed. He reminds his friend that the distinction is one of which they ought to be proud. But Curiatius continues:

True it is that our names can never die; the opportunity is noble, and we should cherish it. We shall be mirrors

of a rare virtue: but yet your heroism has something savage in it; few even of the noblest would wish to seek immortality by such a path. However dear we hold this bubble reputation, obscurity is better than such honor. As for me, I dare say, and you can testify, that I have never hesitated to follow my duty. Not our friendship, our love, or the ties that bind us, could for a moment make my mind waver. And as Alba shows by this choice that she holds us in as high esteem as Rome holds you, so shall I fight for her as you for Rome; my heart is as stout as yours. But I still am human. I see that your honor demands of me my blood; I see that mine requires your death. Betrothed to the sister, I must kill the brother; so hard a fate must we encounter for our country's sake. Still, though I fly fearless to accomplish my duty, my heart recoils from it, and I shudder with horror. I mourn my lot, and look with envy on those whom battle has already bereft of life; yet without any wish to draw back. This great and sad honor touches my heart, but changes me not. I hold dear what it gives, but mourn for what it takes away. If Rome asks a higher virtue, I thank the gods that I am no Roman, that I am still permitted to feel as a man.

Horatius answers him:

If you are no Roman, show yourself worthy to be one: if you are my equal, prove it. The unshrinking courage of which I boast admits no weakness. It is not fit that honor should look behind her as she enters the lists. Great is our misfortune—none can be greater; but I face it, and do not tremble. Let our country send me against whom she will, with joy I blindly accept the post offered to me; the glory of receiving such a trust should stifle all other sentiments. He who, setting out in his country's service, thinks of aught else, is ill prepared to do his duty; this hallowed and sacred law breaks every other tie. Rome has made choice of my arm; that is enough for me. As with full and sincere gladness I married the sister, so do I combat the brother. But enough of futile speech; Alba has chosen you—I know you no more.

Curiatius.—Alas! I know you still, and this thought it is

that kills me: it is your harsh virtue alone that is unknown to me.

Camilla then enters, and Horatius endeavors to embolden her:

Arm yourself with courage, and prove yourself my sister. If I fall by your lover's hand, receive him not as your brother's murderer, but as a man of honor who has done his duty, who has served his country, and proved himself worthy of you. Fulfill your marriage vows as though I were yet alive. But if it be my sword that cuts short his life, receive me victorious in the same spirit, and do not reproach me for your lover's death.

When Camilla is left alone with her lover, she tries to soften his heart, and entreats him to abandon this fearful contest. He has already, she says, done enough for his country. No name is more illustrious than his, and no fresh laurels can add to his glory. If he will remain with her she will not despise him, but will love him the more, because he has been untrue to his country for her sake. But though his heart revolts as much as hers from the terrible strife, not all her entreaties can persuade him to sacrifice his honor by refusing to fight for his country. Alba has committed her fate into his hands, and he must render her an account of his deeds; he must live without reproach, or else die without shame.

This tragic discussion is then varied by the reentrance of Horatius, accompanied by his wife Sabina. "What!" cries Curiatius, "is not Camilla enough to distract my heart? must you too join your tears to hers,

my sister?" But Sabina's despair is beyond tears or entreaties. She has but one wild prayer to make to the combatants. If either one or the other shrank from this glorious misery, she would disown them as brother or as husband; the expedient she suggests to make their fight less unnatural is the very utterance of despair. "Buy by my death the right to hate each other," she cries. "Alba so wills it, and Rome: they must be obeyed." She is the only link between them. Let one of them kill her, and the other avenge her death. After this there will be nothing strange in their conflict; they will be each other's natural enemies.

Sabina's impassioned appeal brings the terrible situation to its climax; for distracted love and misery can go no further. The scene is interrupted by the sudden entrance of the elder Horatius. The two heroes had been almost overwhelmed by the appeals of the women. "My wife!" "My sister!" they exclaim, touched to the heart. "Courage! they are melting," cries poor Camilla; when the father's entrance ends all her hopes.

The Elder Horatius.—**What is this, my sons? Talk you of love? lose you still your time with women? It is yours to shed your blood, not to think of their tears. Fly! leave them to bewail their miseries. Their plaints have too much power over you; they will make you weak as themselves. Such blows can only be escaped by fight.**

The six warriors then prepare themselves for the combat; but as they are standing ready to fight, the people, horrified by the terrible character of the conflict, interpose to prevent it. Tullus Hostilius, the king, appeases

their sudden excitement by ordering the champions to lay down their arms until the oracles have been consulted. But this delay only prolongs the suffering of the unhappy women, through whose hopes and fears the story is here carried on, and who are imprisoned in their house lest they should interrupt the fray.

At length the old Horatius brings them the news that the gods have declined to stay the battle, and that their brothers are at that moment fighting. In the next scene Julia enters to announce that Rome has been beaten. The three Curiatii are yet alive; two of the Horatii have been killed, and the survivor, Sabina's husband, has saved himself by flight. The old Horatius will not at first believe that his son should have turned his back on the enemy. Julia knows nothing further, for her heart failed her when Horatius took flight. The old man does not heed her last sentence, and exclaims: "Did not our soldiers tear him in pieces? Did they admit the coward into their ranks?" Camilla's cry of sorrow here breaks in, and is arrested by the stern despair of the father:

Camilla.—My brothers!

The Old Horatius.— Weep them not, weep them not all!
As two have fallen, their sire would proudly fall.
Let noblest garlands deck their funeral stones,
The glory of their death for all atones.
This joy their souls unconquered have possessed,
That while they lived, Rome was with freedom blest;
Ne'er have they seen a foreign prince obeyed,
Nor their imperial land a province made.
But weep the other! weep the fatal stain
Thrown by his shameful flight upon our fame;

Weep the dishonor of our house renowned,
Th' eternal shame on each Horatius bound.

Julia.—What would you he had done 'gainst such odds?

The Old Horatius.— Die!
Or on sublime despair for aid rely.
Had he a moment longer held the field,
A moment less Rome had been forced to yield,
And honor on my hoary head retained,
By his life's payment had been nobly gained.
Yet must he reckon for his blood with Rome,
Each drop that's spared takes glory from his home;
Each instant that he lives, after this crime,
Prolongs his shame, and with his infamy mine.
My hand must stop his course; a father's rage,
Using 'gainst worthless son the rights of age,
Must prove by the prompt vengeance of his shame,
How such a deed is alien to my name.

Sabina tries to console her father-in-law, but he will listen to no words of comfort, upbraiding her rather that, as her brothers and her husband all live, she has no share in his misery. The next act begins with Camilla's equally vain intercessions for her brother, when Valerius enters, sent by the king to the old Horatius to express sympathy for his sorrow. The real end of the combat is then for the first time revealed. The old Horatius perceives there is something he does not understand, and when Valerius tells him that he has only heard one-half of the story, he brightens up suddenly and exclaims, "What! Rome is then triumphant?" Valerius then relates to him the complete circumstances of the battle. After such a victory there will be no Roman who would not be proud to win the hand of the sister of the deliverer of their country; and he implores

her to show her brother when he returns that they are both of the same blood. But Camilla's misery is not to be vanquished so easily. It is not enough, she moans, that her lover is killed, and that his rival has brought the news, but she is expected in addition to kiss the hand that has pierced his heart. When Horatius enters with his squire, bearing the swords of the three Curiatii, her misery bursts forth without bounds:

Camilla.—Restore my Curiatius or leave me to weep; my joy and my sorrow depend on his lot; I adored him living, and I mourn him dead. Think not to find your sister as you left her. You now see in me only an injured woman who will track your steps like a fury, and at every instant reproach you with his death. Tiger, thirsting for blood, that forbidd'st my tears, and would have me rejoice in his death and sound thy praise to the skies, thus slaying him a second time!—may so many misfortunes accompany thy life that thou may'st envy even me.

Horatius, amazed, reproaches her with being unfaithful to Rome, on which Camilla bursts forth into impassioned denunciation of the cruel city: "Rome, where you were born and which you worship,—Rome, which I hate because she honors you!" She prays that all nations from the East and from the West may rise up against her:

Camilla.—May the anger of heaven, lifted by my prayers, rain fire upon her. May I see with my own eyes that tempest fall, her houses in ashes, her laurels in dust!—see the last Roman at his last gasp, and I, the cause of it, die of pleasure!

This is more than Horatius can bear. He had that day fought for his country, and he will not suffer his

sister to utter such imprecations. He draws his sword, rushes after her as she flees, and kills her behind the scene. Such a deed could not be committed on the stage, following the precept of the poet Horace:

> "Let not Medea with unnatural rage
> Slaughter her mangled infants on the stage."

All such lessons coming down from the classics were as gospel to the French dramatists.

The fifth act brings the tragedy to a climax. Horatius is here put on his defense for the death of his sister. The old Horatius tells his son that though Camilla's fault was great, he was wrong so to punish her. The son answers that his life is in his father's hands, who has full power to take it from him, if it may so please him. Then the king enters with Valerius on a visit of condolence and inquiry, bewailing the new blow, which he fears the old man will find it hard to bear. Valerius, who had loved Camilla, then stands forth and appeals to the king for the punishment of Horatius. Who can be safe, he asks, among the Roman people, who have so many ties with the neighboring nations, if a bride is slain for weeping the death of her bridegroom because he died in battle against Rome? Horatius does not attempt to defend himself. He is willing to die, but prays the king that his death may be an honorable one, and that his name shall not be held up to public reproach.

The scene, which has already assumed the solemnity of a trial, acquires a still deeper interest when Sabina enters. Her despair is of a character very different from that of Camilla, and there is a sombre grandeur about

her, both in this scene and in the previous one, when she offers her life to her husband and brother. Again her entreaty is that her life may be accepted instead of that of Horatius. What has she to live for? she asks. "Sire, behold my misery and the condition to which I am reduced. What horror to embrace a man whose sword has destroyed my entire race! And what wickedness to hate a husband for having nobly served his country, his people and you!" After the wife has thus spoken, the father is heard for his son. Horatius is pardoned. He has lessened his glory by a crime committed in the very moment of victory; but his offense is more than outweighed by the service he has rendered to his country.

Richelieu's Mirame.

Richelieu would not give up the fight, notwithstanding that *Horace* was dedicated to him as a peace-offering. He at once began sounding the praises of a tragi-comedy entitled *Mirame*, of which Desmarets was the reputed author, though probably written in part by the cardinal himself. For its representation he converted into a theatre a chamber of his palace large enough to hold six thousand spectators, providing the finest of stage machinery and decorations, including some of the tallest oaks from the forest of Bourdonnais, at an expense of a hundred thousand crowns. The play was acted before an audience selected by his eminence, who was by far the most interested spectator, his stern features lighting up at every murmur of applause, though, anxious that no line should be lost, he would lean forward from his

box to restore silence. The demonstration which followed the fall of the curtain was evidently insincere, for the piece had little to commend it except its mounting. "Alas!" exclaimed Richelieu, "the French will never learn true taste." "Monseigneur," said one of his flatterers, "the fault lies not with the play, which is really admirable, but with the players, who were half-drunk and did not know their parts." "Yes," replied the cardinal, "they all acted in a most pitiable style." A second performance was more favorably received, but *Mirame* never gained a permanent foothold on the stage.

Corneille's Cinna.

Corneille's *Horace* was followed by *Cinna*, based on a passage from Seneca, but with many original incidents and personages. In majesty of sentiment and language it surpassed any of the former works of the great dramatist, winning the admiration even of the Scudérists. Especially fine is the opening of the second act, where Cinna urges Augustus to restore the liberties of Rome. Finding that Cinna, whom he has trained with paternal care, is engaged in a conspiracy against his life, Augustus summons him into his presence, reminds him of his obligations, tells him that the plot has been discovered, and, as the spectators are trembling for his fate—pardons him. Such magnanimous clemency, free from any suspicion of prudential motives, created a profound sensation, affecting to tears many of the spectators, including the great Condé, then fifty years of age. Moreover, the complexion of the times was eminently favorable to

the success of a play which, like *Cinna,* abounded in generous sentiments; for the extension of regal authority was a general subject of discussion, and the spirit of faction was everywhere abroad.

Richelieu Befriends Corneille.

At length Richelieu became convinced that he could neither suppress the popularity of Corneille nor prevent it from steadily increasing with every fresh production. Hence he determined to establish an entente cordiale with the poet, hoping to bring him under the influence of the court, and perhaps to gather a reflected glory from his works. Whatever his reasons, he now made friendly overtures to the man whom, five years before, he had treated as a hack, and whose progress he had vainly attempted to impede. The overtures were timely and well received; for the wolf was now at the poet's door. His father had died in straitened circumstances, leaving to him the burden of the family's support, for which his means were entirely inadequate.

Soon afterward Richelieu conferred on the dramatist an obligation which made him his life-long friend. Notwithstanding his poverty, Corneille was in love with and loved by Marie de Lamperière, daughter of a lieutenant-general who lived within a day's journey of Rouen. But the young lady's father, being unable to provide her with a dowry, and knowing that her suitor was poor, refused to sanction their marriage, and insisted that the match be broken off. Corneille, who was now engaged upon his *Polyeucte,* took the disappoint-

ment sorely to heart. The pen dropped from his hand, and he felt that his occupation was gone. The pleasant visions which had nerved him to put forth his strongest efforts were dispelled, for before he could secure a competence his beloved would be the wife of another. In this frame of mind he called, one day, at the Palais, where Richelieu asked him what progress he was making with his play. "None," was the reply; "my mind is too much disturbed to permit me to work." In answer to the cardinal's inquiry, he then told him the whole story. "Is that all?" said the minister, with provoking calmness; "well, your troubles will soon be over." Thereupon he summoned the lieutenant-general to the palace, signified his pleasure in the matter, to which the other readily acquiesced, and Marie de Lamperière became Madame Corneille.

Polyeucte.

Within a few weeks *Polyeucte* was ready for the stage, and never was that ancient legend turned to better account. Pauline, daughter of Félix, a Roman patrician, follows him to Armenia, where, in obedience to his commands, she consents to wed Polyeucte, a descendant of an Armenian king. Her affections, however, belong to Sévère, a high-souled Roman citizen, but too poor to find favor in her father's eyes. Appointed general by the Emperor Decius, he follows Pauline to claim her as his bride, but finds her already married. Polyeucte now turns Christian, and for overturning the idols in a temple, during a solemn sacri-

fice, is condemned to death. The sentence executed, Pauline would have been at liberty to accept the hand of Sévère, but her duty as a wife prevails over all other considerations. She strives to obtain his pardon and to induce her husband to purchase life by renouncing his new faith, her efforts being nobly seconded by Sévère. But all is in vain; Polyeucte suffers martyrdom; Pauline, hoping soon to join him, herself turns Christian, and is followed by her father, while Sévère, instead of persecuting them, appears as the incarnation of the spirit of religious tolerance. The story is told with all the beauty of language and wealth of ideas that marked the former works of Corneille. The religious zeal of Polyeucte, the unselfish devotion of his wife, the self-abnegation of Sévère, each forms an exquisite picture, in contrast with which are the darker shades of character assigned to Félix.

With all its merits, the tragedy was at first rejected by the Hôtel de Bourgogne, being returned to the author on account of the nature of its subject. The actors could see in it only the martyr, Pauline, the finest character yet delineated by Corneille, attracting little attention. At the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where it was read by the author before one of the most fashionable audiences in Paris, it was highly praised as a composition, but condemned for its so-called "Christianisms." At one time Corneille had resolved to withdraw it, but at length, after remaining, as it is said, for eighteen months on the canopy of a bedstead, it was put in rehearsal. The result was a genuine triumph. *Polyeucte* was hailed by the public as the

poet's chef d'œuvre, and in this, as in other instances, the verdict of posterity was anticipated. Corneille was so elated that he asked permission, through the duke of Schomberg, to dedicate his tragedy to the king, but without expecting a pecuniary reward. "No, no; it is unnecessary," exclaimed Louis, who was then in one of his parsimonious moods. "Sire," answered the duke, "it is not from interested motives that Corneille seeks this honor." "In that case," said the monarch, "he will do me a pleasure."

Gilbert and la Serre.

About this time appeared a brace of new aspirants, who attracted some attention. The first was Gabriel Gilbert, who aspired to literary honors of all kinds, and if these were to be gained by more industry, would doubtless have won them; but he wrote too much to write well, and was more fortunate in his choice of subjects than in handling them. His first production was *Marguérite de France*, in which one of the characters was Henry II of England. The other new dramatist was Jean Puget de la Serre, in whose *Thomas Morus*, a tragedy in prose, he introduces Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, ascribing to the latter about all the virtues that woman can possess. The drama met with marked success; the entire court sang its praises; Richelieu wept over the sorrows of the heroine, and so great was the throng of spectators that, on one occasion, four doorkeepers were crushed to death. "Voilà," exclaimed the author, referring to this incident, "Corneille has no such proof of the suc-

cess of his plays, and I shall not acknowledge him as my superior until he has five doorkeepers killed in one day."

The next of Corneille's tragedies was *La Mort de Pompée*, as to the reception of which the author had no reason to complain. The events leading up to the death of Pompey are dramatized with remarkable skill and force; in Cornélie the energy of the Roman character is again shadowed forth, and Cæsar, except when he is making love, is all that history represents. Pompey himself does not appear, but the greatest interest is awakened in his behalf. The chief defect of the play was aptly pointed out by one who said that there were too many heroes among the personages, and that consequently the impression made by each was not so distinct and vivid as it might have been.

The state now for the first time took measures to maintain the high tone which the drama had acquired, and to relieve the players from the stigma which the church had cast upon them. Louis the XIII, or rather Richelieu, issued an order forbidding players, on pain of being declared infâme and subjected to other punishments, to give indelicate scenes or to use improper expressions. If the players so regulated their work as to render it altogether exempt from impurity, the king desired that their calling should not expose them to blame or prejudice their reputation in public intercourse. By this edict the social status of the actors was materially raised, and the self-respect which spread among them was in itself a guarantee that the object would be achieved. It may be added that the cardinal

would have been more consistent, if, going a step further, he had exerted his influence at Rome to restore the rights of the communion and the hallowed burial to the followers of an art which he, a member of the sacred college, had so often patronized, and in which he had striven to become conspicuous.

The Liar.

Inspired by the respect thus accorded to their long-condemned profession, the troupe of the Hôtel de Bourgogne addressed themselves with ardor to their work, though meeting only with reverses until, in 1642, appeared Corneille's adaptation of *La Verdad Sospechosa*, soon shortened into *Le Menteur;* or, *The Liar.* It was somewhat of a surprise as well as a success. Thus far, the importance of character in comedy had not been sufficiently recognized, and the main object of the author had been to weave an exciting intrigue. *Le Menteur* relied in a great measure upon the effect of a special idiosyncrasy; for the mendacity of Dorante forms the chief interest, and upon it the whole play turns. The plot, also, is excellent, so much so that Corneille said he would have parted with his two best tragedies for the honor of having invented it. In order to heighten the effect of the performance, Richelieu gave Belrose a superb uniform in which to play Dorante, whereupon the second actor, fearing he would not attract his share of attention, greatly exaggerated his part. Nevertheless, the play was regarded as a masterpiece of comic art, and its success encouraged

Corneille to write a rather tame continuation under the title of *La Suite du Menteur.*

Europe.

Richelieu continued to devote most of his spare time to stage work. In conjunction with Desmarets, his ever-faithful "minister for poetic affairs," he wrote a comedy in which the powers of Europe are personified, and which, as may be supposed, dwelt much on the greatness attained by France under his administration. The play was sent to the academy with a note requesting them to alter the dialogue as they thought fit. The members examined *Europe*—for that was the name of the piece—in a severely critical spirit, and in every page they made omissions, or what they considered other improvements. The manuscript was so full of alterations that the cardinal tore it up, but recovering from his anger, pieced the fragments together, removed all but a few minor corrections, and returned it to the academicians. "Tell them," he said to Boisrobert, "that in profiting by their suggestions I have not adopted them all, as nobody is proof against errors of judgment." Learning that he resented their boldness, the members wisely sent back the manuscript to Richelieu as it had last left his hands, stating that in its present condition it had received their unanimous approval. *Europe* then appeared at the Hôtel de Bourgogne as the work of Desmarets. Its fate was like that of other politico-allegorical plays, without either plot or wit. Its failure was so complete that when one of

the actors came forward at the fall of the curtain to announce a second performance, the pit, unconsciously stinging the minister to the quick, demanded that *The Cid* should be given instead. It would be impossible to realize the vexation thus caused to the great ruler; but the fiasco had at least one good effect; Richelieu never wrote any more dramas.

Death of Richelieu.

The career of the great cardinal was now drawing to a close, for he died before the end of the year. Having succeeded in all his projects except that of destroying Corneille's reputation as a dramatist, his connection with the drama revealed the weakest side of his character. Yet it should be remembered that the annoyance caused by the triumph of *Le Cid* and *Horace* never caused him to withdraw the pension awarded to the author, and that after their reconciliation he seems to have done his best to make atonement. Being asked to compose a few lines of verse in honor of the cardinal's memory, Corneille wrote an epitaph which was none too complimentary, for he had never quite forgiven his slights, though he had forgotten, it would seem, that through his intercession he had gained the hand of Marie de Lamperière. Corneille probably stood alone among dramatists and actors in this lukewarmness of sentiment, for they could not forget that Richelieu had given them much encouragement, to say nothing of more substantial assistance, that he had treated them as artists, invited them to his table and

formally declared their vocation to be worthy of respect.

Corneille's Influence on the Drama.

The death of Richelieu marks the close of an important era in the history of the stage. By the irony of fate, the lustre of his administration had been greatly enhanced by the gifts of him whom he had done his best to disparage. In Corneille's four last tragedies, it will be seen, the principle underlying *The Cid* had been closely adhered to. *Horace* exhibits the virtues of the patriot, *Cinna* of clemency, *Polyeucte* of Christian faith, and *Pompey* of conjugal affection. Each of these superb compositions had justified or augmented the fame of the author, for each had served to reveal his genius in a stronger, though not in a more attractive, light than *The Cid.* It is probable that the genius of Corneille reached its full height in *Polyeucte*—in the portraiture of the wife who, sustained by moral energy and a sense of duty, wrestles with and subdues a passion which forms a part of her being. It may also be remarked that the limits set to his powers were now increasingly apparent; the softer and lighter feelings find no mirror in his page, and his heroines, the "adorable furies," as Balzac calls them, have a more or less masculine aspect. Play-goers must have remarked how narrow was the sphere of the dramatist, though the grandeur and beauty of his work had by this time given it supreme authority as a model; so that nearly every writer thought it necessary to observe the unities and to portray the sterner rather than the softer passions.

III.

Corneille, Scarron, and their Contemporaries.

The supremacy attained by Corneille in both tragedy and comedy was shown by his contemporaries in opposite ways, most of them yielding to the influence of his example, while others, with mortified vanity, closed their connection with the theatre. Among the latter were Mairet, Benserade, Scudéri and Calprenède. The first, whose *Sophonisbe* had done much to aid the classic drama, gave himself up to study, except when employed by the queen on important missions. Benserade, gaining a foothold at the Louvre, devoted himself to the composition of court ballets, in which he adroitly introduced many personages of note. Scudéri's secession was not entirely due to a sense of his littleness in comparison with the poet to whom he had been brought forward as a rival. Educated in the school of Hardi, he chafed against the strict laws of the classicists and the rigor with which they were now upheld. True, he was in no position to despise the earnings of his profession; but he was aided in money matters by the phenomenal success of his sister as a writer of romance. He became governor of a fortress at Marseilles, a post

which demanded so little of his time that it was said he travelled to Marseilles with his sister by coach, heard a salute of ten guns fired in his honor, locked up the fort, put the key in his pocket and set forth the same day on his return to Paris. He fought with the utmost bravery in Condé's early campaigns, and identifying his fortunes with those of the general, became embroiled with the government and was exiled from Paris. During the banishment he won the heart and hand of a young heiress, Mdlle. de Martin Vost, and thenceforth lived in Normandy in the style of a grand seigneur. His plays often show considerable talent and might have kept alive the romantic drama, at least for a time, had it not been for carelessness in their production. Calprenède gathered new laurels in the field of romance, and Chevreau, it may be added, completed his history of the world while acting as secretary to high and titled personages. By these desertions the theatres, of course, suffered appreciably, but others filled their places, while Rotrou and Duryer further distinguished themselves, the latter in a tragedy based on the story of Esther, in which there was no small degree of beauty and strength.

One by one the players who had been associated with the early triumphs of Corneille disappeared from the stage. Mondori died at Orleans, never having recovered from the paralysis with which he was smitten while acting at the Palais Cardinal, and in him was lost the first of a long line of great tragic actors. Bellerose was compelled by some painful malady to abandon the profession in which he had held the highest rank for

many years. In their selection of a successor the company was extremely fortunate, for he was one of those whose name the world will not readily let die.

Gifted Actors.

The Théâtre du Marais had recently acquired a talented actor in the person of Josias de Soulas, known to play-goers as Floridor. A German by birth, after serving in the French army he became a strolling player, but in his thirtieth year was a manager as well as an actor of established repute. Emerging from obscurity at a single bound, he came to the Théâtre du Marais, officiated there as "orator," and on the retirement of Bellerose was elected to fill his place. Every gift required by an actor, it is said, was possessed by Floridor—ardent feeling, trained judgment, fine presence, graceful manners and a musical and elastic voice. He was equally good in both branches of the drama, while the training he had received in elocution gave him an advantage over his predecessor. About the same time other players were added to the troupe, first among whom was Michel Boyron, son of a mercer in a country town. Delighted with the antics of a strolling company at Bourges, whither his father had sent him on business, he immediately joined them, and his success proved that he had not made a mistake. He excelled equally as a hero, prince or lover, and before long became known as the Sieur Baron, for such was the name that Louis XIII bestowed on him after a performance at court. His wife was also employed at

the Hôtel de Bourgogne, where, with her abilities and personal attractions, few characters came amiss.

Rodogune.

Floridor waited for more than a year before an original and effective character fell to his lot, though, meanwhile, many novelties had been produced, among them the tragedy of *Rodogune*, of which Gilbert was the reputed, but not the real author. Corneille had already written four acts of a drama of that name, dealing with the heroism of fraternal affection, and of this play, so far as written, a person in his confidence, either from treachery or indiscretion, gave a minute description to Gilbert, who forthwith wrote a play bearing a close resemblance to the other in plot, situation, and even in speeches. The plagiarist made but a clumsy use of his materials; he enfeebled the interest of the plot, confounded one character with another and piled his own cumbersome verbiage on Corneille's beauties of thought and language, until they were all but lost to sight. Moreover, the fifth act, for which he had to rely upon himself, formed a most lame and impotent conclusion. Of course, the piece fell flat, for its borrowed charms, instead of serving to redeem its dullness only made that dullness more conspicuous.

Corneille now found himself in an embarrassing position. By producing his own *Rodogune* he would allow the public to suppose that he had borrowed from Gilbert at least the plot and the dramatis personæ, unless he exposed his friend to the charge of plagiar-

ism by revealing the real state of the case. In the end, with rare moral courage, he ordered his tragedy to be played, with Floridor as the hero, and preserved absolute silence as to the wrong inflicted upon him. It would be clear that one of the plays was modelled upon the other, and he wisely relied upon his own superior strength. His *Rodogune* was a decided success, and if it did not quite reach the level of *Polyeucte*, it abounded in dramatic effect, and contained more of the element of intrigue than the author had previously shown. The character of *Cléopatre*, queen of Syria, is one of the most terrible ever created for the stage, and the fifth act, in which Gilbert had cut so sorry a figure, may well have fascinated the most apathetic spectator.

Jodelet.

Another novelty which appeared about this time at the Hôtel de Bourgogne is deserving of attention, and this is the *Jodelet, ou le Maître Valet*, a broad comedy in five acts, by Paul Scarron. As yet, the value of dialogue, except in tragedy, had not been fully realized, and it was chiefly by means of character and incident that the approval of the audience was sought. *Jodelet* was written on entirely different principles. Without strongly marked characters, and having only the interest of a commonplace love intrigue at Madrid, in which a valet passes himself off as the master, it relies almost exclusively on verbal pleasantry, on a rapid succession of quips and cranks often filled with wit and gayety. It proved an instant success, especially as Jodelet did

ample justice to the good things assigned to his part. In substance the play belonged to the pre-Corneille school of comedy, and was received by dramatic authors with perfect willingness to profit by the lesson it conveyed. Henceforth dialogue became a prominent feature, sometimes, indeed, too prominent, in the lighter form of drama.

Paul Scarron.

Scarron was, as the complexion of his work would suggest, a joyous devil-may-care, in spite of circumstances which might have soured the finest temper and disposition. He was born in Paris about 1610, his father being an opulent conseiller au Parlement. In his youth a dark cloud came over his worldly prospects. Madame Scarron died; the conseiller married again, and the second wife, having two children herself, exerted her influence over her husband—"the best of men," Scarron once remarked, "but not the best of fathers"—to the detriment of the issue of the first marriage. Incapable of dissimulation, young Scarron had the temerity to upbraid his stepmother for her self-seeking, which raised so great a storm in the household that the conseiller found it expedient to send him away from home. During his exile he passed some months in Italy, returning with a lively admiration of the peculiar farce invented in that country. Though distinguished by a love of wild frolic and a turn for drollery which prevented him from putting two serious ideas together, at the instance of his father, who seems to have had a curious notion of what was due to the ecclesiastical state, he took the petit-

collet. The result was precisely what might have been anticipated. He gave himself up with but little reservation to riotous living. In more than one mad freak which startled Paris from its propriety he was the leading spirit.

His connection with the church, however, did not last beyond his thirty-fourth year. As the story goes, in the course of a carnival at Mans, whither he had been sent to act as canon, he stripped himself to the skin, smeared himself from top to toe with honey, rolled himself on a heap of light feathers until he was thickly covered with them, and then, accompanied by two boon companions similarly attired, started on a tour of the town. On one of the bridges they were stopped and closely surrounded by a swarm of merry-makers, who thought it an excellent joke to pick the feathers from their faces. No sooner was Scarron recognized than the crowd assumed a menacing aspect. In the escapade of the abbé they saw only a deep affront to religion; and some of their number, regardless of the divinity that hedges the priesthood, proceeded to belabor him with right good-will. In this extremity, the feathered bipeds, disengaging themselves from their assailants, jumped over the bridge—long afterward denominated the pont de Scarron—and sought a refuge among the rushes of the Sarthe. The canon got away in safety, but his friends were drowned. It would have been a mercy to Scarron if he had shared their fate. The chill of the immersion, acting upon a system already enfeebled by an ill-regulated life, struck to his very bones; rheumatism in its worst form supervened, and in a few months we find him paralyzed be-

yond hope of cure—"an epitome," as he himself said, "of human misery."

Scarron's bodily affliction, however, neither impaired his mind nor depressed his spirits. Temporarily expelled from the church, and almost entirely dependent upon himself for the means of a livelihood, he became a man of letters. His pen was at first employed in the service of the theatre; for the actors paid what in those days was regarded as a good price for a play, and to him such work was both congenial and easy. The gayety and humor thrown into his writings were still characteristic of the man. Bent almost double in an invalid's chair, with his head bowed on his chest, and with an expression of pain frequently darkening his face, he would keep his hearers in a roar by the drollest of talk. In front of his chair were a desk and writing materials. His fame as a wit having spread abroad, his domicile soon became the resort of the liveliest company in Paris, and for a time eclipsed the glory of the Hôtel de Rambouillet itself. Corneille, Saint-Evremond, Sarrazin, Chapelle, Voiture, Calprenède, Scudéri, Benserade—all these were to be looked for there. Nor, as may be supposed, was the fair sex excluded. In the group at the abbé's we find Mdlle. de Scudéri, who has just completed another ponderous romance; Ninon de l'Enclos, who drives away ennui by regularly changing her lover with the new moon; Marion Delorme, who is now an object of adoration to young abbés instead of old cardinals; and the comtesse de Suze, who has forsaken the religion of her fathers in the hope that she may not see her husband again, either in this world or the next. Scarron's earn-

ings were not equal to his expenses, but it is probable that he received some pecuniary assistance from his father, and before long a pension was given to him by Anne of Austria, in testimony of the delight his writings afforded her.

Zénobie.

Less successful than Scarron's works was a carefully written tragedy by a new dramatist of some distinction in other fields of literature. The eldest son of a lieutenant-general, François Hédelin began life as an advocate, but soon afterward devoted himself to the church, and becoming tutor to Richelieu's nephew, the duke of Fronsac, was appointed, for his faithful services, Abbé d'Aubignac. Most of his time, however, was devoted to letters, especially dramatic criticism, which he wrote in so captious a spirit that those whom he criticised feared and hated him. Such a man, it was clear, should not himself have run u ' isedly the gauntlet of criticism, but the abbé's vanity was greater than his prudence. On the introduction of his *Zénobie*, a prose tragedy which had found favor with the actors, his victims did not fail to turn against him the weapon he had placed in their hands. In full force, and backed by all their friends, they attended the first representation with a firm resolve that it should also be the last. They laughed at every fine speech, roared outright at a scene which the author intended to be especially impressive, and declared not altogether without justice, that *Zénobie* exhibited all the shortcomings with which the abbé had reproached his brother dramatists. Over

awed by this expression of hostility, the company abandoned the play, and the court heaped fresh coals of fire on the abbé's head. The latter had boasted, on one occasion, that he was the only dramatist who had faithfully observed the precepts of Aristotle. "M. l'Abbé," said the prince de Condé, "you are not to be blamed for doing so, but I can never forgive Aristotle for involving you in so great a disaster."

Théodore.

But the abbé was not without consolation. Even Corneille, of whom he had spoken with due respect, was not proof against failure. His *Théodore Vierge et Martyre*, the chief novelty of the autumn, had but a brief existence, and the author frankly admitted that its condemnation was deserved. "Such a piece," he writes, "is nothing but a body without legs or arms, and consequently without action. I should be wrong to oppose the decision of a public to whom I owe so much." The versification is often slovenly and seldom worthy of the author. Two of the worst lines being quoted to Fontenelle, his nephew and biographer, he asked who could have spoiled paper with such stuff as that. "Your dear uncle, the great Corneille," was the unexpected reply.

Among others who came forward in 1645 were Rotrou, Guérin de Bouscal, Douville, and Michel Leclerc, the last a young advocate who wrote a single tragedy of considerable merit, entitled *Virginie Romaine*, and then had sense enough to return to his pro-

fession. Less sensible was another advocate of dramatic proclivities, named Jean Magnon, who, after several failures, was prompted by his morbid vanity to persevere, hoping against hope. By a mere accident, however, he gained a passing notoriety, for his *Artaxerxe* was played by a company of amateurs, among whom was Jean Baptiste Poquelin, destined to become famous on the Parisian stage.

Héraclius.

The author of *The Cid* fully justified Rotrou's encomium by his *Héraclius*, which, if it did not reach the level of his best work, displayed a force peculiarly his own. The source of the play has been a subject of controversy, the most striking incidents resembling those in a drama of Calderon, while the question arises, who was first in the field. The balance of evidence shows that Calderon's plot was borrowed from *Héraclius*, and such in effect is the statement of Corneille himself, whose veracity there is no reason to doubt, especially at a time when the Spanish drama was studied by almost every playright in Paris. Be this as it may, *Héraclius* was a decided success, notwithstanding the defect of an over-complicated plot.

Almost at the same time a drama of hardly inferior merit was produced at the Bourgogne. It was the *Venceslas* of Rotrou, whose passion for gambling had caused him to be arrested for debt. To secure his release he offered to sell the play for twenty pistoles in cash, and it was at once accepted. Seldom had a more

impressive story been fitted for the stage, though in fact it was merely a translation of one by Francisco de Roxas, with only such alterations as would suit it to the tastes of Parisians.

Thomas Corneille.

Among the new dramatists of this period was Thomas Corneille, a brother of Pierre. Some twenty years younger than the latter, he had studied under the Jesuits at Rouen, and in early life relied exclusively on his pen for the means of subsistence. Taking to wife a younger daughter of General Lamperière, Thomas soon became a prominent figure in society, partly by reason of the contrast he presented to his awkward and taciturn brother. In the theatre, however, the latter had a decided advantage; for Thomas, while endowed with a keen perception of dramatic effect, could not rise to the level of *The Cid* and *Polyeucte*. His versification was weak, the more so that he possessed the fatal gift of facility, and as to character and talents the two had little in common except their high moral principles and their enthusiasm for dramatic composition. Yet they had an affection for each other which withstood the test of daily intercourse for nearly forty years. They lived in adjoining houses, and in a wall which separated their studies was a sliding panel, of which Pierre availed himself when, as often happened, he had occasion to ask his brother for a missing word or rhyme. Thomas regarded him with reverence, while the author of *The Cid* declared that he would have given much to have written

his brother's best work. The first attempt of Thomas Corneille was *Les Engagements du Hasard,* which met with fair success, and about the time of its production at the Bourgogne a graceful compliment was paid by the court to the elder Corneille.

Opera.

The opera, a form of entertainment which admitted of great spectacular effects, had been invented, as we have seen, in Italy, where it was now firmly established. In 1645 an operatic performance of *La Festa Teatrale della Finta Pazzia* was held at the Petit Luxembourg by a company brought from Italy for that purpose. Their patron was cardinal Mazarin, who occupied, but did not fill, the place of Richelieu, being urged by Urban VIII, pontiff and poet, to try the experiment. The libretto was by Jacques Torelli, a Venetian architect of theatrical proclivities, and the score by Giulio Strozzi. Had the minister foreseen the result of the experiment, he would never have ventured to make it. The spectators showed no signs of approval—some in order to mortify the obnoxious cardinal, others because they knew nothing of Italian, and still others because they objected to opera on principle. As the matter was put by the critic Saint-Evremond, "A play sung from beginning to end, with the personages discoursing in music on the most important as well as the most ordinary affairs of life, was contrary to nature, to the imagination, and offensive to the understanding." The critic might well have been asked whether French tragedy, with its

rhymed alexandrines and stately declamation, was less contrary to nature than what he denounced so bitterly. Piqued at his ill success, Mazarin ordered the opera of *Orfeo* to be played three times a week in the small salon of the Palais Royale, but it became a subject of derision at the court, and the publication of a satire on the subject caused the cardinal to disband his company. In its place he determined that an opera under the guise of a drama should be written by a dramatist of the French court, and for the purpose was selected Pierre Corneille. The result was *Andromède*, a graceful poem set to action with musical embellishments and a great variety of stage pictures and other decorations. The work was known to be a masterpiece, and greatly aroused the expectations of the court, but at the last moment the performance was indefinitely postponed. It was denounced by the queen's chaplain, condemned by the doctors of the Sorbonne and, though afterward sanctioned by the church, was again postponed on account of the insurrection of the Fronde, when Anne of Austria found it necessary to take refuge in flight with her young son, afterward Louis XIV, and cardinal Mazarin. Meanwhile new works were produced by Thomas Corneille, Boisrobert, Rotrou, Scarron, Duryer and others.

Andromède.

The storm passing over, the court returned to Paris, and *Andromède* was represented for the first time on a stage fitted up in the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon. Its success was instantaneous and complete, but this was due in part

to the scenic features under the care of Torelli, by whose appliances it required but a few seconds to change a set of elaborate scenery. His achievements at Venice as a stage mechanician gave rise to the suspicion that Torelli had dealings with the devil, and more than one attempt was made to assassinate him. Finding Venice too warm for him, "the great sorcerer," as he was styled, betook himself to Paris, where he was well received by Mazarin. While the marked success of *Andromède* was partly due to scenery and music, the lines also showed a grace of fancy for which even *The Cid* had hardly prepared the audience. Soon after the *Andromède* appeared Pierre Corneille's heroic comedy of *Don Sanche d'Arragon*, at first well received, but after a few nights played before the slimmest of audiences.

Nicomède.

Fairly successful, though only of political interest, was Corneille's *Nicomède,* which would have been pronounced dull had not the author shot a thread of fine irony through the speeches of the hero, dignified some of the scenes with elevation of character, and clothed the whole with the energetic language of which he was an unrivalled master. The time was opportune for its production. Condé and the prince of Conti had been released from the imprisonment caused by their attitude toward the court, and Paris was en fête after hearing the news. *Nicomède,* which appeared in the midst of this excitement, contained more than one passage in harmony with public sentiment, and the progress of the

play was often interrupted by significant bursts of applause.

Madame Scarron.

And now we must return for a moment to the abbé Scarron, of whom it may first of all be mentioned that he had entered into the matrimonial state. In the train of his guests he had noticed a beautiful girl of sixteen summers, named Françoise d'Aubigné. Her previous history and present position could not but give her great interest in his eyes. Of good birth, but a penniless orphan, she had fallen into the hands of a distant relative, Madame de Neuillant, who induced her, though not without considerable difficulty, to abjure Calvinism, the faith in which she was brought up, and who was now looking for a religious community that would receive Françoise without the customary dot. Meanwhile, Cinderella-like, the girl was reduced to the most menial occupations, until she was received, ere long, into the household of her kind protectress. Scarron was sensibly impressed by her beauty, her charm of manner and her cruel degradation. Suddenly becoming poetic, he sang of her under the names of Sylvia and Chloris, and finally, moved by passion and compassion, he resolved to provide for her himself. Did she wish to enter a convent? In that case he would pay the necessary money. Did she wish to marry? As for himself, he could offer only a limited fortune and a very ugly face. For once the jester was in earnest, and Mdlle. d'Aubigné, after a little hesitation, accepted the second proposal. "Immortality," he said to the notary as the marriage contract was being prepared, "is

what I settle upon her. The names of kings die with them; that of the wife of Scarron will live forever." The prediction was to be verified, though not exactly in the sense which the poet had anticipated.

Madame Scarron imparted a new charm and a new character to the meetings at her husband's house. Her timidity as a girl soon wore off, revealing a woman of skillful management, grace of manner and wit. Her salon became a temple of pleasure, and the proudest cavalier or dame thought it a privilege to be included in her set. The tongue of scandal was busy enough with her name, but there is absolutely no reason to suppose that her conduct justified the aspersions cast upon her. Nor is this her only claim to respect. From the hour of her marriage a change came over the tone of the gatherings in her salon; the conversation became decent without losing any of its brightness, as void of offense to ears polite as any to be heard in the refined atmosphere of the Hôtel de Rambouillet.

Don Japhet D'Arménie.

Scarron himself yielded to the purifying influences exerted by his wife. Both at the table and in his writings he ceased to indulge in unclean jests or expressions, and the first comedy he wrote after his marriage, *Don Japhet d'Arménie,* bears emphatic testimony to the change thus wrought in him. Not inferior in liveliness to what had gone before, this play, in which a fool by profession appears for the first time on the French stage, was not only comparatively free from the taint of indecency, but

caused so little scandal that the author obtained permission to dedicate it to the king, a privilege of which he availed himself in a characteristic manner. "On occasions such as these," he writes, "it is usual to say in fine language that you are the greatest monarch in the world; that at the age of fourteen or fifteen you are more learned in the art of government than a gray-bearded ruler; that you are the handsomest of men, to say nothing of kings, etc. I do not propose to say any such thing; for all that may be taken for granted. I simply seek to persuade your majesty that, if you extended to me a little practical encouragement, you would not be doing a great wrong; that if you gave me a little practical encouragement, I should be gayer than I am; that if I were gayer than I am, I should produce more lively comedies; that if I produced more lively comedies, your majesty would be amused; that if you were amused, your money would not be wasted."

Cyrano de Bergerac.

In the circle at Scarron's residence was a man who never appeared in the streets of Paris without striking terror into the hearts of the passers-by. His name was Cyrano de Bergerac, known in the regiment of the Guards, to which he belonged, as a "démon de la bravoure." Rare, indeed, were the days on which he had not a duel on hand, usually caused by the strange deformity of his nose, at which people would laugh or stop to stare in the street, whereupon a challenge was sure to follow. His sword also appears to have been at the service of friends, as is proved by a well-authenticated

incident. A poet named Sinière, being assailed by twenty bravos at the instigation of a noble whom he had lampooned, Cyrano, who chanced to come up at the moment, attacked them single-handed, and in an instant killed two and wounded seven of the assailants, while the remainder, who recognized him as the "devil for courage," took to flight. He also distinguished himself at the sieges of Mouzon and Arras, and was severely wounded on each occasion. The fear that his injuries would be fatal, together with the exhortations of a nun from the Faubourg Saint Antoine, brought him to a better way of thinking and of living. He left the army, returned to Paris, and though he did not cease to cross swords with those who offended him, devoted himself to literature. His first writings were directed to scientific subjects, but among his works appeared a most curious one, entitled *A Comic History of the States and Empires of the Moon and Sun.*

La Mort D'Agrippine.

Cyrano's first tragedy, entitled *La Mort d'Agrippine,* dealt with the conspiracy of Sejanus against Tiberius. It was produced at the Bourgogne under the patronage of an influential friend; but Cyrano's views on matters astronomical had brought him into collision with the priesthood, and at the first performance of his play most of the audience were in hostile mood. In the fourth act, where Séjan, in view of his triumph over Tibère, exclaims, "Trappons; voilà l'Hostie!" the storm broke forth; the voices of the actors

were drowned amid cries of "Atheist!" "Wretch!" "Comme il parle du Saint Sacrement!"

Le Pédant Joué.

Cyrano was presently consoled for this failure by the success of his comedy, entitled *Le Pédant Joué*, in which were some noteworthy features. Written in prose, a peasant, who is one of the characters, speaks in the jargon of his native province, contrary to all precedent. The dialogue is bright and amusing and the interest is further increased by the fact that the pedagogue-hero was the principal of the college of Beauvais, where the author was educated. Montfleuri, who played in the piece, did not satisfy the writer, who ordered him not to appear again on the stage for a month. Believing that he could not be in earnest, the actor paid no heed to the injunction. But Cyrano was very much in earnest, for the very next night he appeared in front of the pit, and, with a look of grim determination, roared out to the player that he must quit the stage or abide the consequences. Montfleuri meekly obeyed, and the audience was either too much frightened or too much astonished to make any demonstration at this unheard-of tyanny.

Pertharite.

A great misfortune was soon to befall the Hôtel de Bourgogne in the fate of an historical tragedy by the author of *The Cid*, entitled *Pertharite, Roi des Lombards*. Not only was the versification feeble, but the

subjects were singularly unfortunate. The spectacle of a husband ransoming his wife at the price of a kingdom could not but excite ridicule, especially at a time when marital obligations were incurred only to be set aside. *Pertharite* did not survive its second representation, and it cannot be said that it deserved a better fate. For reasons unexplained, Corneille, who had cheerfully submitted to the popular verdict in other unsuccessful plays, was so irritated that he resolved to write no more for the stage. "It is better," he said, "to take leave of my own accord than to be forced into retirement. I am getting too old to be still in vogue. But I have the satisfaction of leaving the French stage in a better state than I found it, both in art and morals." The Parisian world probably attributed this resolution merely to a fit of pique; for Corneille was only forty-seven years of age, and none of his contemporaries were able to contend against him. Nevertheless, he was in earnest, for, withdrawing to Rouen, he began a translation of Thomas-à-Kempis, a work in which the queen took a lively interest.

Quinault.

The appearance on the stage of Philippe Quinault was attended with an innovation in theatrical affairs which may here be noted. Hitherto it had been the custom of the players to buy pieces outright, the amount paid being determined by the reputation of the dramatist. Corneille, for instance, received for his plays about two hundred crowns, and at times a larger sum, always obtaining a higher price than any of his

brother dramatists. One day Tristan appeared by appointment in the green-room of the Bourgogne to read a tragi-comedy, entitled *Les Rivales*. Every one was pleased with it, and the authorities, supposing Tristan to be its author, offered for it a hundred crowns. The terms were gladly accepted, Tristan at the same time stating that the play was from the pen of Quinault, in whose fortunes he was deeply interested. This, he presumed, would not interfere with the arrangement just concluded. But the players declared that for a piece by an untried author they could not give more than fifty crowns. Unwilling to concede this reduction, Tristan suggested that a system of payment by results should be adopted. The author, for instance, might be allowed one-tenth of the receipts during the first run of the play, which thereafter would belong exclusively to the theatre. The old system had not been without its drawbacks, for if the play was a failure the actors were so much out of pocket by its purchase, and, if it succeeded, they were expected to make the author a substantial present. Tristan's proposition was therefore adopted, and Quinault profited greatly by the change. *Les Rivales* was the feature of the season, the applause bestowed on it being heard two or three hundred yards away.

Quinault was a native of Paris and a baker's son, though receiving a much better education than most of the children of the Bourgeoisie. In early boyhood he attracted the notice of Tristan, who, observing his precocious intelligence and engaging manners, treated him with almost paternal tenderness. Naturally he

sympathized with his patron's tastes and pursuits, *Les Rivales* being written under his direction. Handsome, vivacious, sociable and modest, he was esteemed by all with whom he came in contact, except those whom jealousy induced to disparage him. Two later works by Quinault added considerably to his reputation.

L'Ecolier de Salamanque.

Before the end of the season the Hôtel de Bourgogne found itself engaged in a trial of strength with the Théâtre du Marais. Scarron, one evening, read to some guests at his own house, *L'Écolier de Salamanque*, adapted by himself from a Spanish piece and intended for the Marais. Thereupon Boisrobert, who was one of the party, immediately procured the original, adapted it in his own fashion and brought it out at the Bourgogne, under the title of *Les Généreux Ennemis*. In addition to this act of treachery, when *L'Ecolier* made its appearance, he declared that Scarron had borrowed his drama and marred it in the borrowing. For this breach of the laws of honor he did not go unpunished. The inevitable comparison between the two plays told heavily against him. *L'Écolier* was written in Scarron's distinctive style, and, unlike *Les Généreux Ennemis*, introduced a character which at once caught the fancy of the town. This was his Crispin, the parent of a numerous progeny of stage valets, the origin of which is not far to seek. Many deserters from the Spanish army had found employment in the houses of wealthy French families, and in Crispin we have one

of these deserters turned into a valet. His dress resembles that of a Spanish soldier, his speech abounds in allusions to war. If in one respect he seems to belong to Paris rather than Madrid—if he puts off the saturnine gravity peculiar to his nation and becomes a wit—it is because the conditions of his existence required him to be amusing. However that may be, he quickly ingratiated himself with every play-goer, and *L'Écolier* drew large crowds to the often-deserted pit of the Marais. Scarron showed his sense of Boisrobert's conduct in several acrid epigrams, and even the influence of his wife could not prevent him from indulging in coarse invectives.

During its brief existence, *Les Généreux Ennemis* was played alternately with *Les Illustres Ennemis*, by Thomas Corneille. Quinault was now deep in law studies, but he found time to write *L'Amant Indiscret*, the incidents of which seem to have been suggested by a piece represented at Lyons in the previous year, *L'Étourdi*. At the first performance, the stage-spectators overwhelmed him with congratulations, but the greatest compliment was paid to him by one of his own clients, who sat mute and motionless through sheer force of astonishment. "Could the author of these pretty and flowing lines," he asked, "be the young lawyer, who, but a few hours previously, had proved himself a master of the details and phraseology of litigation?" Of Boisrobert it is related that, on the morning of the day when his *Apparences Trompeuses* was to be produced, he was seen at church in an attitude of deep devotion, with an enormous breviary open before him.

"Who is this excellent man?" someone asked M. de Coupeauville, abbé de la Victoire. "The abbé Boisrobert, who is to preach this afternoon at the Hôtel de Bourgogne," was the reply. Not long afterward Coupeauville met Boisrobert leaving the theatre on foot. "Where," he asked, "is your coach?" "Stolen while I was inside the theatre," answered the dramatist. Another piece written by Boisrobert at this time was *L'Amant Ridicule*, which included a ballet des Plaisirs. The lover in question, learning that his mistress deems valor, a quality in which he is deficient, the highest quality of manhood, induces a cousin to feign a duel with him at a moment when she will be sure to witness it. The advantage, of course, is to be on his side; but the cousin, who happens to be desperately enamored of the lady himself, takes particular care that this part of the stratagem is not carried out.

Death of Tristan.

In *La Comédie sans Comédie*, a strange medley by Quinault of every known form of the drama, the Théâtre du Marais again lighted upon a little mine of wealth, thanks in some measure to the efforts of two players new to the town—Laroque and Hauteroche. *La Comédie sans Comédie*, which did not justify its appellation, was the last of Quinault's plays that had the benefit of being revised by the author of the still popular *Mariamne*. In the autumn of 1655, Tristan died at the Hôtel de Guise from consumption, probably aggravated by his irregular habits, his devotion to the

gaming-table, and, above all, his griéf at the loss of an idolized wife and son. But few of the day-dreams of his youth had been realized. In a few lines, which he is said to have written as an epitaph upon himself, we seem to have the echo of a wasted life, and his *Page Disgracié*, nominally a romance, presents us with a vivid narrative of his early career. But even in his most self-reproachful mood he must have felt that he had not lived wholly in vain. The success of his *Mariamne* had "balanced" that of *The Cid*. In the delineation of the softer passions he had illustrated the superiority of the language of the heart over the jargon of gallantry. The much-coveted honor of a seat in the Academy had been conferred upon him. It is probable, however, that all this afforded him less comfort in his dying hour than the almost filial affection of Quinault, whose gratitude to his old benefactor could not have proceeded from a sense of favors to come.

Death of Cyrano de Bergerac.

In the same year, to the intense relief of Parisian society in general and Montfleuri in particular, Cyrano de Bergerac was gathered to his fathers. Entering the duc d'Arpajon's house one evening he was struck on the head by a piece of wood, probably hurled at him by somebody who had felt the point of his sword. The wound assumed a threatening aspect. Being advised to seek perfect rest, he went to live in the house of a brother, where, although watched over with the greatest care, he died. He was still in the prime of manhood;

duelling and dissipation had prevented him from doing justice to his intellectual gifts, but the little he had written was to keep his name alive. The influence of *Le Pédant Joué* was strong, and his fantastic treatise on the sun and moon, itself a faint imitation of Rabelais, is supposed to have suggested to Swift the idea of *Gulliver's Travels.*

Death of Barron.

Barron, too, was now to disappear. Impersonating Don Diègue in *The Cid,* he was wounded in the foot by the sword of Chimène's father, and as gangrene supervened, the doctors believed it would be necessary to amputate the injured member. Exclusively dependent upon his earnings as an actor, and reluctant, perhaps, to live upon the charity of his comrades, he refused his consent to the operation. "A pretty figure," he said, "an actor with a wooden leg would make on the stage." He died a few weeks later, as appears in the *Gazette,* a news-letter in burlesque verse devoted to matters theatrical.

Heroism of Rotrou.

But a greater loss than all had occurred this time in the death of Rotrou, the oldest and most valued of Corneille's Parisian friends. For some time past Rotrou had filled the post of magistrate at Dreux, his native town, where, except when he had a play in rehearsal, he invariably resided. In the summer of 1655 a terrible epidemic visited Dreux, and, setting all medical skill at defiance, threatened to carry off the whole of

the population. Most of the local officials fled, but Rotrou, disregarding the entreaties of friends, would not follow their example. Holding the offices he did, he thought it was incumbent upon him to assist in checking the progress of the disorder, to mitigate suffering and to comfort the bereaved. "The peril in which I stand," he writes to his brother, "is imminent. The bells are at this moment tolling for the twenty-second death to-day. Before long, perhaps, they will toll for me; but my conscience tells me I am only performing my duty. The will of God be done!" He accordingly remained at his post, and three days after the letter was written the gloom of the townsfolk was deepened by the announcement that Rotrou had fallen a victim to the scourge. Prone as Frenchmen are to forget public services, the name of this intrepid magistrate is still held in affectionate veneration by the good people of Dreux, although more than two centuries elapsed before a monument to his memory was erected on the scene of his self-sacrifice. In his case, perhaps, no such tribute was required. His chief tragedies, with all their inequalities and shortcomings, occupy a permanent place in French literature; and the heroism which marked his premature end would show that, if he excelled in the portraiture of generous impulses and sentiments, it was because he was no stranger to them himself.

Timocrate.

The Théâtre Marais was now about to enjoy the greatest theatrical success thus far exhibited in the

stage annals of France. Quinault and Thomas Corneille, who had hitherto written nothing but comedies and tragi-comedies, suddenly essayed their powers in tragedy proper. The first gave the town a *Mort de Cyrus*, the second a *Timocrate*. Neither elevated nor energetic, *Cyrus* did not hold the audience for a moment, and the ridicule excited by some of the lines quickly stamped it as a failure. Very different was the fate of *Timocrate*. The walls of the theatre shook with applause, and Louis XIV himself was a spectator at one of the performances. The author, in addition to being told that he had surpassed his brother, was seriously recommended to lay down the pen for good, as he had nothing to add to his glory, and might imperil it by other works. In all, *Timocrate* was represented eighty-four times in succession, by far the longest run yet achieved, and it is probable that the piece would have remained on the bills for some time further if the actors had not found their task intolerably monotonous. "Messieurs," said the orator of the troupe to the audience, "it would seem that you are never tired of listening to *Timocrate*. For ourselves, we are utterly tired of playing it. If we go on doing so we shall run the risk of forgetting our other pieces. Permit us, then, to withdraw it." It was evidently believed, behind the scenes, that the tragedy might be revived at no distant period with equal success; and the audience, perhaps holding a similar opinion, granted the request. But *Timocrate* was never seen on the stage again. Extravagantly praised, it had to face the ordeal of extravagant censure, and its merits were not sufficiently great to

carry it through a trying ordeal; therefore, the apparent wisdom of withholding it.

Corneille's Return to the Stage.

Nothing discouraged, the rising dramatist brought out a *Bérénice*, based on the *Cyrus* of Madeleine de Scudéri, and in the words of Loret, "young Corneille was now the marvel of the theatre," especially as others had failed, and Duryer, after a long struggle with ill-fortune, had just gone to his rest. But the young poet was not to enjoy this distinction long. Pierre Corneille, who was now in his fifty-third year, and whose moroseness had not been lightened by the dull routine of his Rouen life and the labor of translating Thomas-à-Kempis, began to cast wistful glances on the scene of his early triumphs. The pique he felt at the condemnation of *Pertharite* had passed away, while the longing to figure again as the hero of a first night—to have his verse declaimed by a trained stage artist, to hear the rounds of applause that would follow each noble speech, to receive the homage due to the greatest dramatic genius of his time—took possession of his mind. His altered resolution appears in some lines addressed to Fouquet, who, delighted to be the means of restoring the author of *The Cid* and *Polyeucte* to the boards, left no stone unturned to confirm it. He loaded the poet with delicately-rendered benefits, at the same time suggesting that he would do well to treat the finely tragic legends of *Œdipus* and *Camma*. In the former, by far the more difficult of the two, Corneille found an

acceptable theme, and an *Œdipe* from his pen, with Floridor as the fate-driven hero and Mdlle. Beauchâteau as Jocaste, was brought out at the Bourgogne early in 1659.

Œdipe.

As may be supposed, the news that the old favorite had reëntered the lists created no little excitement. The audience assembled in a sanguine mood, for it was probable that the contemplation which comes of leisure had reinvigorated his mind, and he was reported to have elaborated the play with patient care. Unfortunately, their hopes were only partially realized. Executed under the most favorable conditions, *Œdipe* yet fell short of anything like greatness, dramatic or poetic, and must have gone with the succession of plays beginning with *Rodogune* to suggest that Corneille was no longer capable of producing a *Cid*, a *Cinna* or a *Polyeucte*. In truth, his genius seems to have decayed soon after his marriage. It was a plant which attained a precocious maturity, put forth the richest fruit, and then passed into a state of comparative unproductiveness. In all that he had conceived during the last seventeen years a gradual decline of force is apparent. Here and there we are reminded of what he had been, but the effect is like that of a flash of lightning in an ever-darkening sky. Unlike Sophocles, whose *Œdipus* he had lately striven to surpass, he fell short of himself as time went on. "Believe me," the outspoken and misanthropic Duc de Montausier said to him, "verse-making is the prerogative of youth only;" and in this instance, it must

be allowed, the proposition was not unsupported by the logic of facts.

Decline of Corneille's Powers.

Nor did Corneille retard his downward course by making full use of the residue of his power. He now wrote in the spirit of a statesman rather than of a poet. He aimed at political instead of ethical interest. He subordinated passion and imagination to force of reasoning. He appealed more than ever to the sentiment of admiration. He relied upon ingenious complexity of plot in preference to transcripts of human nature. If his object in all this was to disguise his weakness, to prove that his hand had not lost its cunning, he could not have been worse advised. His change of policy led him to select subjects unsusceptible of the best kind of dramatic effect, and it was not in his power to redeem or gloss over their poverty by beauties of detail and diction. Broadly speaking, his later plays are heavy, uninspiring and lifted above mediocrity only by the dignity and keen insight with which he treated his ill-chosen materials. Nevertheless, his popularity outlived his work. The announcement of a novelty from his pen did not fail to bring together a large and well-disposed audience, and the voice of criticism was softened by grateful remembrance of the intellectual enjoyment derived from his best productions. *Œdipe*, with all its shortcomings, was applauded so vigorously that Louis XIV appeared at the Bourgogne to see it—an honor not frequently done to the theatre. From this time, however, his supremacy was to be divided with another.

IV.

Molière and the Corneilles.

In the Rue Saint Honoré, at the corner of the Rue des Vieilles Étuves, there had long stood a house bearing the sign of the Pavilion des Cinges, and appropriately ornamented over the doorway with an old sculpture representing apes in an apple-tree. Soon after the assassination of Henri Quatre, this house fell into the hands of an upholsterer named Poquelin, who soon became one of the most prosperous of the Parisian bourgeoisie. Besides doing well in business, he held the appointment of valet-tapissier to the king—that is, he accompanied his majesty about the country, looked to the draperies of the apartments occupied by the court in the châteaux, and in particular circumstances made up the royal bed-chamber. He married one Marie Cresse, who possessed a small fortune, and who, although her father was a tradesman, seems to have been of good descent. Four or five children were the issue of the union, the eldest, Jean Batiste Poquelin, coming into the world on the 15th of January, 1622. This is the one who, amid the prankishness of youth, was to prove a source of anxiety to parents, whimsical in his studies, a stroller at maturity, yet in

the end, under a changed name, a power in the dramatic world.

Molière's Boyhood and Education.

As a boy, it is said, Jean displayed a surprising turn for mimicry. He reproduced, with accuracy and humor, the peculiarities of servants, customers in the shop and the priests and worshippers at the church, to which his mother, one of the most pious of women, led him every Sunday for mass and vespers. Madame Poquelin, proud as she may have been of his precocious intelligence, sternly set her face against such amusements, especially when they were indulged in at the expense of the clergy. "Lisette," said Jean to a work-girl in the house, after receiving a sound chastisement for such an offense, "can you tell me why my imitations of the priest make them so furious?" "Certainly," was the reply; "you succeed only too well, my little Jean." It is obvious that, if the young mimic was to become a respectable citizen, he should have been kept away from the theatre; but a good-natured relative, usually supposed to have been his maternal grandfather, frequently carried him off to see Bellerose and the trois farceurs at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Before long he had theatricals on the brain, and neither threats nor caresses could induce him to initiate himself into the mysteries of his father's business. "I verily believe," M. Poquelin exclaimed, "that the boy will turn actor"—a suggestion which at that time sent a shiver through the frames of all right-minded persons, playgoers not excepted. Modern criticism has rejected

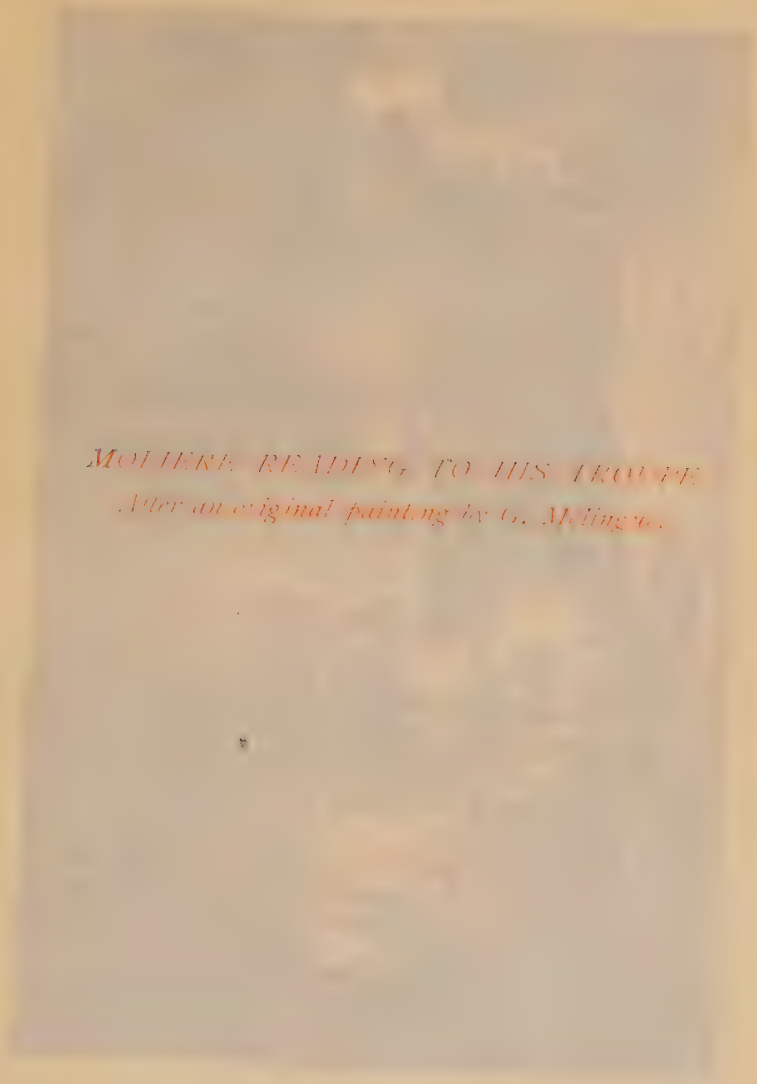
some of these stories as apocryphal, but they are chiefly from the lips of Jean himself, and doubtless relate what is very near the truth as to his early career.

In his fourteenth year, after losing his mother, Jean was sent as a day-boarder to the college of Clermont, where, as a means of extending their influence and gaining valuable recruits, the Jesuits educated a large number of boys gratuitously, or for a nominal sum. The pupils represented many grades of society, and the variety of character they exhibited must have brought much food for reflection to so quick an observer as Jean is reported to have been. His chosen companions at the college were four youths destined to attain eminence in different ways—the prince de Conti, Chapelle, Bernier and Hesnault. According to biographical tradition, he made rapid progress in humanities and rhetoric, the more so because the Jesuits industriously fostered a spirit of emulation among their flock. Nor was his education confined to what he learned at the college. Chapelle, at the instance of his father, entered upon an independent course of philosophy under Gassendi; and young Poquelin, with Hesnault and Bernier, was allowed to join him. It is significant that in a short time he should have set to work upon a translation of Lucretius, but we may reasonably doubt whether the strangely qualified epicureanism of the tutor exercised more than a passing influence over his mind. Cyrano de Bergerac, as the story goes, obtained admission to the little class by bursting in upon them, laying his hand upon his sword, and threatening the philosopher with death if the favor were denied him. In 1641, owing to the illness of his father, Jean went

with Louis XIII and the court to the south as valet-tapissier, the reversion of which office had previously been secured for him by purchase. But M. Poquelin did not intend his son to have only one string to his bow. Jean devoted himself to law studies, and a satirical ballad directed against him in after years, referring to his appearance at the Palais de Justice in the robe of an advocate, may be taken as a proof that he was actually called to the bar.

Amateur Theatricals.

His liking for the stage, however, had not been destroyed by the study of the law. He joined a company of amateurs who, collectively known as the "Illustre Théâtre," played in a racket court supported by trestles in the quartier de Saint Paul. These performances were well attended, for the reason, perhaps, that admission was free; but the amateurs, attributing their success to another cause, removed their theatre to a tennis court in the faubourg Saint Germain, and, in defiance of the privileges of the comedians by profession, charged a small fee for admission. The self-confidence of the little band was somewhat rudely dispelled; by ceasing to act gratuitously they at once lost ground in public estimation; their audiences dwindled to a mere handful, and these came only to decry them. In this emergency, Jean, assuming command of the troupe, summoned to his aid a few players who chanced to be in Paris at the time—two brothers and two sisters named Béjart, apparently of good birth, and a buffoon named Duparc, better known as Gros-René. Madeleine, the elder of the two



MOLIÈRE READING TO HIS TROUPE
After an original painting by G. Mélingue.

"All the actors loved their chief, who united to ex-

ing manner."

sisters, is described by a contemporary as one of the best of living actresses; and she was certainly one of the most beautiful. Even her charms, however, did not restore the fortunes of the Illustre Théâtre. The enterprise ended in disaster, young Poquelin being proceeded against and imprisoned for debt by the costumier, the tallow-chandler and other creditors.

A Strolling Player.

Happily, this cruel experience did not make the young player disgusted with the stage. His taste for it had, indeed, become a passion; and at length, giving way to an overmastering impulse, he took possession of a little fortune bequeathed to him by his mother, formally relinquished his right to the reversion of his father's office at court, resigned his chances of forensic distinction, and determined to go into the country with the Béjarts and Duparc as a strolling player. His family, of course, were greatly distressed at the news. In their view he was deliberately foregoing excellent prospects to adopt a calling held in scant respect, the decree of Richelieu notwithstanding. In order to diminish their annoyance he exchanged the name of Poquelin for that of Molière, the origin of which is a matter of speculation. But any entreaties that were made to him to reconsider his intention fell upon deaf ears. In 1646 he left Paris with his new-found colleagues, and, unable to believe that a passion for the stage could account for such an act of self-sacrifice, his friends declared that the young advocate had deserted the law to follow Madeleine Béjart—a

notion which in years to come obtained some currency.

Molière, to whom his companions looked from the outset for guidance, may have been induced by his almost proverbial generosity to make good the deficiencies of the theatrical exchequer from his own pocket, but even in that case the troupe could hardly have escaped the hardships inseparable from the course of life they had adopted. It was truly a changeful life—one of constant tramping from place to place, of alternate success and disappointment, of steady perseverance in all circumstances, and also, perhaps, of more or less stirring adventures. Now the strollers find themselves in a district scourged by civil war; now they deferentially seek the sanction of some upstart maire to perform within his jurisdiction; now they declaim the stately verse of Corneille in a barn or on a stage improvised in the street; now they look ruefully at each other as the keeper of the inn in which they have sojourned lays his reckoning before them. Scarron's *Roman Comique* enables us to realize in some measure the conditions of their existence; indeed, it is not improbable that this whimsical picture of itinerant players in the seventeenth century —a work destined to outlive the drollest of its author's farces—was suggested in part by a chance encounter with the Illustre Théâtre at Mans, where the scene of the story is laid. "Molière," writes a contemporary, "was neither too stout nor too thin. He was rather above than below the medium height; his carriage was noble, his legs finely formed; he had a serious air and walked gravely. His complexion was dark; his nose

and mouth were rather large, his lips a little thick, his eyebrows very black, and the changes of his facial expression incessant. As to character, he was gentle, kind and generous." Destin, the hero of the *Roman Comique*, is a man of similar stamp—"sympathetic, refined in manner, brave, contemplative, amiable, a personification of pleasant insouciance, by turns grave and gray, full of noble impulses." Whatever may have been the source of Scarron's inspiration in this instance, the district particularly favored by Molière and his companions was the south and the southeast of France, the heart of the territory in which the troubadours of old had sung.

Early Plays.

It was not long before fame began to mark him for her own. He achieved considerable distinction as an actor. In tragedy, it is true, he was not at home; but a keen sense of humor, aided by experience, study, attention to by-play, and a striking naturalness of recitation and manner, in direct contrast to the style cultivated on the Paris stage, seems to have given life and spirit to all his parts in comedy. "The delicacy with which he embodied a character and expressed a sentiment," says Grimarest, "proved that he was profoundly versed in the art of declamation. He entered into the smallest details of a part, and, unlike those who have no fixed rule or principle for their acting, did not recite at hazard." Fortunately, the applause he won in this way did not satisfy his ambition. He wrote at least eleven farces, of which only *Le Médecin Volant* and *La*

Jalousie du Barbouille have come down to us, except by name. They belonged to what are known as the baissers du rideau of the Italian school, replete with diverting incident, often lighted up by flashes of wit, and depending in a large degree upon the resources of the players. In Molière's own words, they "procured him some little reputation," though not of a kind to afford him the highest pleasure. He longed to follow up the path opened in the *Menteur*, which, as he frankly avowed in after years, fixed his ideas on the subject of comedy. It was to be feared that a play of this order would be received with less favor by provincial audiences than one like the *Médecin Volant*, but the young dramatist was not deterred by the prospect of a little temporary loss from making the experiment. In *L'Étourdi*, working upon a story taken from *L'Innavvertito*, he produced a work which, if not entirely free from the rough fun in vogue, was remarkable alike for spirit, truth and the individuality of at least one of the characters. Mascarille, a clever valet, possibly suggested by Davus, devises a variety of schemes to aid his master, Lélie, in a love pursuit. He is foiled at almost every step by the blundering interference of the latter, who, however, among other good qualities, wins our respect by the very straightforwardness that causes his discomfiture. Molière was soon reassured as to the result of his new departure. *L'Étourdi* evoked extraordinary applause, and the use made of it by Quinault in *L'Amant Indiscret* would suggest that its fame was not confined to a narrow area.

At Lyons, where this delightful little comedy first

appeared, the troupe seems to have been reinforced by five new players—Mdlle. Duparc, Ducroisy, Lagrange and the Debries. The first was a sister of Gros-René, for whom Molière had written at least two of his Italian-like farces. Nothing could have been more queenly than the way in which she filled the most dignified characters, such as the heroines of Corneille. Philibert Gassaud, Sieur Ducroisy, was a gentleman of Beaure, who had long withstood a strong penchant for the stage. In tragedy and anything like serious comedy he proved a valuable recruit. Charles Varlet, Sieur de Lagrange, had come from Amiens. He had rare intelligence and taste, which Molière cultivated to the highest point. Edouard Wilquin, Sieur Debrie, an inveterate drunkard, was engaged on account of his wife, Catherine Leclerc, a woman of finely sympathetic nature, on whom he relied for subsistence, but whom he often subjected to brutal ill-treatment. Any affection she may have had for him had long since died away; she lived only for her art, and to that art she proved a distinguished ornament. "Mdlle. Debrie," writes one who saw her, "was tall, slender and graceful; noble in her manner and natural in all her attitudes, with something particularly delicate in her face and features, which rendered her most fitting for the part of ingénue. Her eyes had a peculiar charm of candor and tenderness."

Mdlle. Debrie.

The accession of Mdlle. Duparc and Mdlle. Debrie serves to throw new light on the character of Molière.

If tradition may be credited, he fell desperately in love with the former, to whom he made an offer of marriage, but was deliberately refused. Her beauty led her to believe that she might make what the world would deem a good marriage, and in Molière she saw only a moderately successful author and strolling player. Had a presentiment of his future greatness crossed her mind she might have returned a different answer. It was in vain that Molière endeavored to forget his disappointment. He fell a prey to melancholy, and ceased for a time to feel any interest in the present or the future. Mdlle. Debrie, who from the outset had understood him better than any one else, endeavored to dispel his sadness. By degrees she induced him to make her his confidant, to feel that her sympathy was dear to him. "I fear," he said to her one day, "that you have done me a cruel kindness. My malady seems to have left me, but in reality it has only changed its form. I now require a physician to heal the wounds you have yourself caused." No music could have been more grateful to the ear of the long unhappy woman than these words. Considerations which even in that age must have had weight with her—the obligations of a wife, self-respect, her regard for the opinions of others—all were scattered to the four winds. "Those wounds," she said, "have been more fatal to myself than to you."

Prince de Conti.

Mdlle. Debrie may well have been regarded by Molière as a personification of Fortune. From this

moment he struck into the current which swept him to his goal. His fellow-pupil at college, the prince de Conti, now at peace with the government, had taken up his quarters at the château of La Grange, near Pézénas, where he wished to be entertained by the players. His secretary, De Cosnac, afterward bishop of Aix, sent for the troupe of Molière, and accompanied by Debrie, who bore the loss of his wife like a man of the world, and did not allow resentment to interfere with his interests, they promptly set forth for Pézénas. In the meantime, however, the prince had impatiently engaged another set of players, headed by one Cormier. Molière arrived, and, being told that his services were not required, asked that the expenses he had incurred by the journey should be defrayed by the prince. The request was reasonable enough, but the prince, who was said to be "obstinate about trifles," would not accede to it. "This injustice," writes Cosnac, "had so much effect upon me that I decided to have a representation by Molière's troupe in the theatre at Pézénas, and to give them 2,000 crowns from my own pocket rather than not to keep faith with them. M. le Prince, touched in his honor by my conduct, also consented that they should play once in the theatre at La Grange," the result being that they were kept there during the whole of his stay.

Le Dépit Amoureux.

Molière's stock was now enriched by another excellent comedy, *Le Dépit Amoureux*, written in the style of *L'Etourdi*. It had two distinct plots, one of which

turns upon the love-tiff just related, and was invented by himself. The play seems to have afforded much delight to the household at La Grange, thanks to the humor, spirit and grace of the dialogue. Did the prince de Conti recognize in the author-actor, whose claim for expenses he had refused, the Jean Batiste Poquelin of college days? History does not tell us; but tradition has it that from this time the prince took a practical interest in Molière's prosperity. In a few months he was advised to change his circuit so as to be within reach of Paris, and while at Rouen, in the autumn of 1658, the troupe received a summons to act in Paris before the king.

As *Le Dépit Amoureux*, or *The Love-tiff*, had been a favorite acting comedy since its first production in 1656 until as late as 1875, some further mention of it will be here in place. The incidents are in the main arranged artistically, but after the Spanish fashion, the plot being too complicated and the ending unnatural. The characters are well delineated, and fathers, lovers, mistresses and servants all move about amid a complication of errors from which there is no visible disentangling. Nearly all French actors who have played valets or soubrettes have attempted the character of the valet and Marinette, and even the great Rachel once took the latter part, though it was clearly out of her line. *The Love-tiff* has been imitated by Dryden in his *Evening's Love*, and by Vanbrugh in his *Mistake*, where the scene is laid in Spain, and the French is paraphrased with a spirit and ease which is seldom found in a mere translation. Finally, it was freely borrowed in

The Wrangling Lovers of Ravenscroft, of whom Baker says in his *Biographia Dramatica*, "He was a writer or compiler of plays, who lived in the reigns of Charles II and his two successors. He was an arrant plagiary." Scene IX, between Albert, father of Lucile, acted by Molière, Lucile, Valère, her pseudo-lover, and Mascarille, his servant, requires no explanation:

Mascarille.—Signor Albert, at least be silent. At length, madam, everything conspires to make your happiness complete. Your father, who is informed of your love, leaves you your husband and gives his permission to your union, provided that, banishing all frivolous fears, a few words from your mouth corroborate what we have told him.

Lucile.—What nonsense does this impudent scoundrel tell me?

Masc.—That is all right. I am already honored with a fine title.

Luc.—Pray, sir, who has invented this nice story which has been spread about to-day?

Valère.—Pardon me, charming creature. My servant has been babbling; but our marriage is discovered without my consent.

Luc.—Our marriage?

Val.—Everything is known, adorable Lucile; it is vain to dissemble.

Luc.—What! the ardor of my passion has made you my husband?

Val.—It is a happiness which causes a great many heart-burnings, but I impute the successful result of my courtship less to your great passion for me than to your kindness of heart. I know you have cause to be offended, that it was a secret which you would fain have concealed. I myself have put a restraint on my ardor, so that I might not violate your express commands; but . . . . .

Masc.—Yes, it was I who told it. What great harm is done?

Luc.—Was there ever a falsehood like this? Dare you mention this in my very presence, and hope to obtain my hand by this fine contrivance? What a wretched lover you are—you, whose gallant passion would wound my honor because it could not gain my heart; who wish to frighten my father by a foolish story, so that you might obtain my hand as a reward for having vilified me. Though everything were favorable to your love—my father, fate and my own inclination, yet my well-founded resentment would struggle against my own inclination, fate and my father, and even lose life rather than be united to one who thought to obtain my hand in this manner. Begone! If my sex could with decency be provoked to any outburst of rage, I would let you know what it was to treat me thus.

Val.—(To Mascarille.) It is all over with us; her anger cannot be appeased

Masc.—Let me speak to her. Prithee, madam, what is the good of all these excuses? What are you thinking of? And what strange whim makes you thus oppose your own happiness? If your father were a harsh parent, the case would be different; but he listens to reason, and he himself has assured me that if you would but confess the truth, his affection would grant you everything. I believe you are a little ashamed frankly to acknowledge that you have yielded to love; but if you have lost a trifling amount of freedom, everything will be set to rights again by a good marriage. Your great love for Valère may be blamed a little, but the mischief is not so great as if you had murdered a man. We all know that flesh is frail, and that a maid is neither stock nor stone. You were not the first, that is certain; and you will not be the last, I dare say.

Luc.—What! can you listen to this shameless talk, and make no reply to these indignities?

Albert.—What would you have me say? This affair puts me quite beside myself.

Masc.—Upon my word, madam, you ought to have confessed all before now.

Luc.—What ought I to have confessed?

Masc.—What? Why, what has passed between my master and you. A fine joke, indeed!

Luc.—Why, what has passed between your master and me, impudent wretch?

Masc.—You ought, I think, to know that better than I; you passed that night too agreeably to make us believe you could forget it so soon.

Luc.—Father, we have too long borne with the insolence of an impudent lackey. (Gives him a box on the ear.)

SCENE X.

Albert, Valère, Mascarille.

Mascarille.—I think she gave me a box on the ear.

Albert.—Begone! rascal, villain! Her father approves the way in which she has made her hand felt upon your cheek.

Masc.—May be so; yet may the devil take me if I said anything but what was true!

Alb.—And may I lose an ear if you carry on this impudence any farther!

Masc.—Shall I send for two witnesses to testify to the truth of my statements?

Alb.—Shall I send for two of my servants to give you a sound thrashing?

Masc.—Their testimony will corroborate mine.

Alb.—Their arms may make up for my want of strength.

Masc.—I tell you, Lucile behaves thus because she is ashamed.

Alb.—I tell you, you shall be answerable for all this.

Masc.—Do you know Ormin, that stout and clever notary?

Alb.—Do you know Grimphant, the city executioner?

Masc.—And Simon, the tailor, who used formerly to work for all the people of fashion?

Alb.—And the gibbet set up in the middle of the marketplace?

Masc.—You shall see they will confirm the truth of this marriage.

Alb.—You shall see they will make an end of you.

Masc.—They were the witnesses chosen by them.

Alb.—They shall shortly revenge me on you.

Masc.—I myself saw them at the altar.

Alb.—And I myself shall see you with a halter.

Masc.—By the same token, your daughter had a black veil on.

Alb.—By the same token, your face foretells your doom.

Masc.—What an obstinate old man!

Alb.—What a cursed rascal! You may thank my advanced years, which prevent me from punishing your insulting remarks upon the spot; but I promise you, you shall be paid with full interest.

Molière at Court.

Molière's first performance before the king took place in the guard hall of the old Louvre, and the players may well have been unnerved as they peeped through the little hole in the curtain at the audience. No such gathering had ever assembled to watch them. The court of France—the most splendid in history—was present in all its strength. Here was Louis XIV, now twenty years of age, an ardent votary of pleasure, yet stately and reserved, with strength of character plainly written in his face; here was his brother, dressed more like a girl than a boy; here was Anne of Austria, still regent of France, and though grown somewhat stout, retaining much of her celebrated beauty; here, conspicuous by his red robe, his finely-cut features and long, white hair, was Cardinal Mazarin, who for many years had guided the vessel of State. To the rear was a host

of the butterflies belonging to the court, together with a few actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, all anxious to see of what stuff these favored rivals were made. The play bespoken for the evening was Corneille's *Nicoméde*. We may suspect that, as the performance went on, a feeling of disappointment stole over the audience, the actors from the Bourgogne excepted. Molière and his companions were, of course, far less at home in the stately lines of Corneille than in the quick and vivacious dialogue of Molière, and the trepidation incident to the occasion must have rendered them unable to do anything like justice to themselves. *Nicomède* finished, Molière, sensible of their shortcomings, took a very unusual step. He made a speech from the stage; he thanked his majesty for his goodness in bearing the defects of the troupe, who had naturally felt some agitation on finding themselves before so august an assembly, and who, in their eagerness to have the honor of playing before the greatest king in the world, had forgotten that he had already much better actors in his service. "As," continued Molière, "his majesty has so far endured our country manners, I venture, very humbly, to hope that I may be permitted to give one of the little pieces which have procured me some reputation, and with which I have been fortunate enough to amuse the provinces." The king assented by retaining his seat, and the audience, who but a moment before had been preparing to disperse, resumed an attitude of attention. The piece referred to was *Le Docteur Amoureux*, one of Molière's earliest farces. The result must have more than equalled his anticipations. He

quickly converted failure into triumph, and everybody present had much ado to restrain his loudest laughter. The actors from the Bourgogne must have felt that in Molière they had a dangerous rival in comedy—an impression considerably deepened when, an hour or two later, it was found that the king had requested him and his comrades to establish themselves in Paris under the style and title of the "Troupe de Monsieur."

And now the goal was won. After a probation of twelve years, representing the best period of his life, Molière had fully justified his abandonment of the career once prepared for him. His self-imposed exile from Paris, an exile which, as might have been expected of a Frenchman born and bred there, he had felt very deeply, was at an end. He had appeared before the king, had won his favor and had received from him a substantial guarantee of future support. No longer was it necessary for him and those who had cast in their lot with his to trudge from one provincial town to another, to bow low for permission to regale the populace with the choicest productions of French dramatic genius, and then, as was too often the case, to be received with apathy by a throng incapable of appreciating the value of what he set before them. Nor was his exultation materially damped by a want of cordial recognition from his family. Even after he had become famous, his brother omitted his name from a genealogy which, in the pride of their mother's descent, they caused to be drawn up; but old M. Poquelin, actuated by an almost superstitious faith in the judgment of kings, to say nothing of paternal affection, welcomed

him with open arms. Next came social recognition; the doors of many exclusive houses were open to the man on whom the sun of Court favor had begun to shine. If only his mother, the devout Marie Cresse of thirty years before, who had been pious enough to thrash him for mimicking a priest, could have lived to join in the welcome! As for the troupe, he had endeared himself to them by his good-will and generosity, and a sense of the fact that they owed their present position to his gifts served to strengthen the ties which bound them to him. No leader was ever regarded with more affectionate loyalty by his followers than Molière.

The theatre assigned to him was the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon, where, by the influence of Mazarin, a new troupe of Italian players had begun to appear three times a week in farce. The rivalry of these foreigners was not to be despised, especially as they showed a very strong tendency to use French, in preference to their own language. From one point of view, no doubt, their entertainment had a rather monotonous aspect. Its personages, as in bygone times, were nearly always the same—harlequin, pantaloon, columbine and the rest,—but to the delight of the cardinal, who probably supported it as a means of establishing opera in France, the more it was shown the better it seemed to be liked. Frequently novel in plot, it was animated throughout by a joyous spirit, to which ample effect was given on the stage.

Molière took the off-days of the Italian comedians—Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Before his campaign opened he was joined by L'Epi, of the Marais,

and an actor of great excellence in both tragedy and comedy, Guillaume Marcoureau, Sieur de Brécourt, formerly an officer in the army. Unfortunately, the latter had an ungovernable temper, and his engagement in the troupe had hardly been signed when, having run an insolent coachman through the body on the Fontainebleau road, he sought refuge in Holland from the vengeance of the law. Molière began with *Héraclius* and other tragedies by Corneille, but it was not until *L'Étourdi* and *Le Dépit Amoureux* were played that his troupe won the town they were permitted to woo. The charms of these pieces, set forth by clever and disciplined acting, were acknowledged with enthusiasm, and nothing was wanting to the triumph of the dramatist but the presence of the king. Alive to the mistake he had made in giving, at the outset, a succession of tragedies, Molière instantly proceeded to confirm the advantage he had gained. He would write another comedy, and it occurred to him that by importing into his work some genial, yet incisive ridicule, of a popular folly, he would do himself no harm.

Les Précieuses Ridicules.

He had not far too look in Paris to find an inviting subject. In one respect, it may be said, Parisian society had taken leave of its senses. The ultra-refinement introduced by the marquise de Rambouillet was being carried to an almost incredible extreme. Every frequenter of the ruelles and salons of fashion adopted a

style of speech in comparison with which the euphuism of yore was lucidity itself. Extravagant metaphors and emblems were employed to designate the merest trifles. The précieuses and their worshippers would not have been content to call a spade "an oblong instrument of manual industry." In their language a nightcap was a "complice innocent de Mensonge;" water, "humeur celeste;" a chair, a "commodité de la conversation;" a mirror, a "conseiller des grâces." If, in their laborious attempts to coin new phrases they often became unintelligible to each other, as was probably the case, they deemed it only another proof of their delicacy of thought and expression. Blended with this curious neologism, too, was a studied and elaborate affectation of chaste, romantic sentiment. Nothing could be more beautiful than Platonic love, but as "the world must be peopled" it was necessary to enter into the holy state of matrimony, though not with any appearance of haste. Only by slowly and barely perceptible degrees should a female heart "yield to its assailant." No lover should have a chance of being made happy until he had traversed the whole of Loveland, as mapped out for the instruction of the sterner sex by Madeleine de Scudéri. Beginning at Indifference, he would have to gradually make his way throughout Disinterested Pleasure, Respect, Assiduity, Empressment and Sensibility to the city of Tenderness, whence the river of Inclination would bear him to the Dangerous sea, as laid down in the map of the country of Tenderness. Proposals of marriage should be met at first by a blank refusal, however deeply engaged the affections might be. Many of

the fantastic ideas thus cherished were favored by romances of the *Clélie* and *Cyrus* type, from which, indeed, a new code of social laws was deduced, and which, with a mass of madrigals and sonnets, remarkable at best for dainty gallantry, were accepted by the elegant contemporaries of Corneille and Pascal as literature of the first water. Naturally enough, the folly of the précieuses found imitators among the younger section of the Bourgeoisie. Many an honest citizen suddenly found himself an object of derision and scorn to his womenkind on account of his honest directness of utterance, his unpolished manners, his profound want of sympathy with what they called poetry.

Molière, it must be remembered, was still an obscure comedian, as yet, uncertain of his footing in the capital, and by the course he proposed would inevitably provoke the hostility of an influential sect. Nevertheless he did not hesitate. Determined to arrest this increasing corruption of taste, sentiment and language by force of satire, he wrote a comedy in one act, entitled *Les Précieuses Ridicules.* Madelon and Cathos, respectively the daughter and niece of Gorgibus, a plain-speaking citizen, have been bitten by the prevailing rage. They give themselves up to the romances of Mdlle. de Scudéri, call themselves Polixène and Aminte and their maid Almanzor, and generally behave in a way which leads the old man to suspect their sanity. To crown all, they reject with ineffable disdain the proposals of two suitors of good worldly position, but unfortunately unversed in the ways of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. "How," asked Madelon, "could we be ex-

pected to endure such irregular proceedings as theirs? To begin point-blank by proposing marriage?"

The lovers, indignant at the lofty scorn with which they have been repelled, cause their valets, Mascarille and Jodelet, to lay siege to the hearts of the précieuses in the guise of gentlemen of quality. The scheme is as successful as they could wish. Poor Madelon and Cathos mistake the lively impudence of the two valets for the quintessence of Parisian gallantry, and are lost in admiration of a wretched impromptu composed by Mascarille. But from this seventh heaven of delight they are abruptly lowered. The rejected lovers appear; the valets are stripped of their borrowed plumes, and the précieuses have reason devoutly to wish that the earth would open under their feet to hide their confusion. It is interesting to note that, while holding up their affectation to laughter, Molière does not alienate them from our sympathies, which are never with the authors of the deception practiced upon them. He indirectly suggests that, so far from being blue-stockings in the ordinary sense of the term, they are mere girls under the influence of a passing mania. But while showing this tenderness for them he does not lose sight of his chief object. The model they set before themselves is assailed with a humor and satirical power previously unknown to the stage.

Evidently unaware of the castigation in store for them, several well-known précieuses, including Mdlle. Deshoulières, Menage, Chaplain and Ninon de l'Enclos, were among the audience. No sooner did the meaning of the comedy become manifest than the theatre rang with

laughter and applause. Many a man present had a Madelon or a Cathos at home; all, like children admitted behind the scenes, saw with wonder and mirth the tinsel, which, from a distance, they had admired as crowns and royal robes. "Courage, Molière," cried an old man, starting up in the parterre, "that is true comedy." Ménage had the sagacity to perceive that the purpose of so vivacious a satire would be attained. "Monsieur," he said to Chapelain, "we have approved too much the follies which Molière has so pointedly and sensibly ridiculed. As Saint-Remi remarked to Clovie, we must 'burn what we have adored and adore what we have been disposed to burn.'" By others of its victims, however, the piece was taken in a different way. No sooner had the first representation ended than powerful influence was exerted to prevent a second, and Molière received an official order not to play the piece again. In two or three weeks, however, the prohibition was withdrawn, probably at the instance of the king, before whom *Les Précieuses Ridicules* was played during his sojourn in the Pyrenees. Although an ardent admirer of Madeleine de Scudéri's romances, Louis XIV was induced by his love of tormenting others—a curious trait in his character—to take part with the audacious dramatist. The comedy therefore reappeared in the bills of the Hôtel du Petit Bourbon, where, notwithstanding a considerable advance in the prices of admission, it remained for four months, with two performances daily. According to Loret, it was much visited by all sorts of people. "It cost me only thirty sous to see it," he adds, "but I laughed to the value of more than ten pistoles." The

following extracts are fair specimens of Molière's humor:

ACT I. SCENE II.

Gorgibus, Du Croisy, La Grange.

Gorgibus.—Well, gentlemen, you have seen my niece and my daughter. How are matters going on? What is the result of your visit?

La Grange.—They will tell you this better than we can. All we can say is that we thank you for the favor you have done us, and remain your most humble servants.

Du Croisy.—Your most humble servants.

Gorg.—(Alone.) Hoity-toity! Methinks they go away dissatisfied. What can be the meaning of this? I must find it out. Within there!

SCENE III.

Gorgibus, Marotte.

Marotte.—Did you call, sir?

Gorgibus.—Where are your mistresses?

Mar.—In their room.

Gorg.—What are they doing there?

Mar.—Making lip salve.

Gorg.—There is no end of their salves. Bid them come down. (Alone.) These hussies with their salves have, I think, a mind to ruin me. Everywhere in the house I see nothing but whites of eggs, lac virginal and a thousand other fooleries I am not acquainted with. Since we have been here they have employed the lard of a dozen hogs at least, and four servants might live every day on the sheep's trotters they use.

SCENE IV.

Madelon, Cathos, Gorgibus.

Gorgibus.—Truly there is great need to spend so much money to grease your faces. Pray tell me, what have you done

to those gentlemen, that I saw them go away with so much coldness? Did I not order you to receive them as persons whom I intended for your husbands?

Madelon.—Dear father, what consideration do you wish us to entertain for the irregular behavior of these people?

Cathos.—How can a woman of ever so little understanding, uncle, reconcile herself to such individuals?

Gorg.—What fault have you to find with them?

Mad.—Theirs is fine gallantry, indeed. Would you believe it? they began with proposing marriage to us.

Gorg.—What would you have them begin with—with a proposal to keep you as mistresses? Is not their proposal a compliment to both of you, as well as to me? Can anything be more polite than this? And do they not prove the honesty of their intentions by wishing to enter these holy bonds?

Mad.—Oh, father! Nothing can be more vulgar than what you have just said. I am ashamed to hear you talk in such a manner; you should take some lessons in the elegant way of looking at things.

Gorg.—I care nothing for elegant ways. I tell you marriage is a holy and sacred affair; to begin with that is to act like honest people.

Mad.—Good Heavens! If everybody was like you, a love-story would soon be over. What a fine thing it would have been if Cyrus had immediately espoused Mandane, and if Aronce had been married all at once to Clélie!

Gorg.—What is she jabbering about?

Mad.—Here is my cousin, father, who will tell you as well as I that matrimony ought never to happen till after other adventures. A lover, to be agreeable, must understand how to utter fine sentiments, to breathe soft, tender and passionate vows; his courtship must be according to the rules. In the first place, he should behold the fair one of whom he becomes enamored either at a place of worship, or when out walking, or at some public ceremony; or else he should be introduced to her by a relative or a friend, as if by chance, and when he leaves her he should appear in a pensive and melancholy mood. For some time he should conceal his passion from the

object of his love, but pay her several visits, in every one of which he ought to introduce some gallant subject to exercise the wits of all the company. When the day comes to make his declaration—which generally should be contrived in some shady garden-walk while the company is at a distance—it should be quickly followed by anger, which is shown by our blushing, and which, for a while, banishes the lover from our presence. He finds afterward means to pacify us, to accustom us gradually to hear him depict his passion, and to draw from us that confession which causes us so much pain. After that come the adventures, the rivals who thwart mutual inclination, the persecutions of fathers, the jealousies arising without any foundation, complaints, despair, running away, and its consequences. Thus things are carried on in fashionable life, and veritable gallantry cannot dispense with these forms. But to come out point-blank with a proposal of marriage—to make no love but with a marriage-contract, and begin a novel at the wrong end! Once more, father, nothing can be more tradesmanlike, and the mere thought of it makes me sick at heart.

Gorg.—What deuced nonsense is all this? That is high-flown language with a vengeance!

Cath.—Indeed, uncle, my cousin hits the nail on the head. How can we receive kindly those who are so awkward in gallantry? I could lay a wager they have not even seen a map of the country of Tenderness, and that love-letters, trifling attentions, polite epistles and sprightly verses are regions to them unknown. Do you not see that their whole person shows it, and that their external appearance is not such as to give at first sight a good opinion of them? To come and pay a visit to the object of their love with a leg without any ornaments, a hat without any feathers, a head with its locks not artistically arranged, and a coat that suffers from a paucity of ribbons! Heavens! what lovers are these! what stinginess in dress! what barrenness of conversation! It is not to be allowed; it is not to be borne. I also observed that their ruffs were not made by the fashionable milliner, and that their breeches were not big enough by more than half a foot.

Gorg.—I think they are both mad, nor can I understand anything of this gibberish. Cathos, and you, Madelon . . . . .

Mad.—Pray, father, do not use those strange names, and call us by some other.

Gorg.—What do you mean by those strange names? Are they not the names your godfathers and godmothers gave you?

Mad.—Good Heavens! how vulgar you are! I confess I wonder you could possibly be the father of such an intelligent girl as I am. Did ever anybody in genteel style talk of Cathos or of Madelon? And must you not admit that either of these names would be sufficient to disgrace the finest novel in the world?

Cath.—It is true, uncle, an ear rather delicate suffers extremely at hearing these words pronounced, and the name of Polixena, which my cousin has chosen, and that of Amintha, which I took, possess a charm which you must needs acknowledge.

Gorg.—Hearken; one word will suffice. I do not allow you to take any other names than those that were given you by your godfathers and godmothers; and as for those gentlemen we are speaking about, I know their families and fortunes, and am determined they shall be your husbands. I am tired of having you upon my hands. Looking after a couple of girls is rather too weighty a charge for a man of my years.

Cath.—As for me, uncle, all I can say is, that I think marriage a very shocking business. How can one endure the thought of lying by the side of a man who is really naked?

Mad.—Give us leave to take breath for a short time among the fashionable world of Paris, where we are but just arrived. Allow us to prepare at our leisure the groundwork of our novel, and do not hurry on the conclusion too abruptly.

Gorg.—(Aside.) I cannot doubt it any longer; they are completely mad. (Aloud.) Once more I tell you I understand nothing of all this gibberish; I will be master, and to cut short all kinds of arguments, either you shall both be married shortly, or, upon my word, you shall be nuns; that I swear.

SCENE VI.

Cathos, Madelon.

Cathos.—Good Heavens, my dear, how deeply is your father still immersed in material things! how dense is his understanding, and what gloom overcasts his soul!

Madelon.—What can I do, my dear? I am ashamed of him. I can hardly persuade myself I am indeed his daughter; I believe that an accident, some time or other, will discover me to be of a more illustrious descent.

Cath.—I believe it; really, it is very likely; as for me, when I consider myself . . . . .

SCENE VII.

Cathos, Madelon, Marotte (their maid).

Marotte.—Here is a footman asks if you are at home, and says his master is coming to see you.

Madelon.—Learn, you dunce, to express yourself a little less vulgarly. Say, Here is a necessary evil inquiring if it is commodious for you to become visible.

Mar.—I do not understand Latin, and have not learned philosophy out of Cyrus, as you have done.

Mad.—Impertinent creature! How can this be borne! And who is this footman's master?

Mar.—He told me it was the marquis de Mascarille.

Mad.—Ah, my dear! A marquis! a marquis! Well, go and tell him we are visible. This is certainly some wit who has heard of us.

Cathos.—Undoubtedly, my dear.

Mad.—We had better receive him here in this parlor than in our room. Let us at least arrange our hair a little, and maintain our reputation. Come in quickly, and reach us the Counsellor of the Graces.

Mar.—Upon my word, I do not know what sort of a beast

that is; you must speak like a Christian if you would have me know your meaning.

Cath.—Bring us the looking-glass, you blockhead! and take care not to contaminate its brightness by the communication of your image.

SCENE X.

Madelon, Cathos, Mascarille, Almanzor (a lackey).

Mascarille.—(After having bowed to them.) Ladies, no doubt you will be surprised at the boldness of my visit, but your reputation has drawn this disagreeable affair upon you; merit has for me such potent charms that I run everywhere after it.

Madelon.—If you pursue merit, you should not come to us.

Cathos.—If you find merit among us, you must have brought it hither yourself.

Masc.—Ah! I protest against these words. When fame mentioned your deserts it only spoke the truth.

Mad.—Your complaisance goes a little too far in the liberality of its praises, and my cousin and I must take care not to give too much credit to your sweet adulation.

Cath.—My dear, we should call for chairs.

Mad.—Almanzor!

Almanzor.—Madam.

Mad.—Convey to us hither, instantly, the conveniences of conversation. (Exit Almanzor.)

Masc.—But am I safe here?

Cath.—What is it you fear?

Masc.—Some larceny of my heart; some massacre of liberty. I behold here a pair of eyes that seem to be very naughty boys, that insult liberty and use a heart most barbarously. Why the deuce do they put themselves on their guard, in order to kill any one who comes near them? Upon my word! I mistrust them; I shall either scamper away or expect very good security that they do me no mischief.

Mad.—My dear, what a charming facetiousness he has!

Cath.—I see, indeed, he is an Amilcar. (One of the heroes of *Clélie*, who would be thought sprightly.)

Mad.—Fear nothing; our eyes have no wicked designs, and your heart may rest in peace, fully assured of their innocence.

Cath.—But, pray, sir, be not inexorable to the easy chair, which for this last quarter of an hour has held out its arms to you; yield to its desire of embracing you.

Masc.—Well, ladies, and what do you think of Paris?

Mad.—Alas! what can we think of it? It would be the very antipodes of reason not to confess that Paris is the grand cabinet of marvels, the centre of good taste, wit and gallantry.

Masc.—As for me, I maintain that, out of Paris, there is no salvation for the polite world.

Cath.—Most assuredly.

Masc.—Paris is somewhat muddy; but then we have sedan chairs.

Mad.—To be sure; a sedan chair is a wonderful protection against the insults of mud and bad weather.

Masc.—I am sure you receive many visits. What great wit belongs to your company?

Mad.—Alas! we are not yet known, but we are in the way of being so; for a lady of our acquaintance has promised us to bring all the gentlemen who have written for the *Miscellanies of Select Poetry.*

Cath.—And certain others who, we have been told, are likewise the sovereign arbiters of all that is handsome.

Masc.—I can manage this for you better than any one; they all visit me, and I may say that I never rise without having half a dozen wits at my levée.

Mad.—Good Heavens! you will place us under the greatest obligation if you will do us the kindness; for, in short, we must make the acquaintance of all those gentlemen if we wish to belong to the fashion. They are the persons who can make or unmake a reputation at Paris; you know that there are some whose visits alone are sufficient to start the report that you are a connaisseuse though there should be no other reason for it. As for me, what I value particularly is that, by

means of these ingenious visits, we learn a hundred things which we ought necessarily to know, and which are the quintessence of wit. Through them we hear the scandal of the day, or whatever niceties are going on in prose or verse.

Cath.—Indeed, I think it the height of ridicule for any one who possesses the slightest claim to be called clever not to know even the smallest couplet that is made every day.

Masc.—It is really a shame not to know from the very first all that is going on; but do not give yourself any further trouble; I will establish an academy of wits at your house, and I give you my word that not a single line of poetry shall be written in Paris but what you shall be able to say by heart before anybody else. As for me, such as you see me, I amuse myself in that way when I am in the humor, and you may find handed about in the fashionable assemblies of Paris two hundred songs, as many sonnets, four hundred epigrams, and more than a thousand madrigals, all made by me, without counting riddles and portraits.

Mad.—I must acknowledge that I dote on portraits; I think there is nothing more gallant.

Masc.—Portraits are difficult, and call for great wit; you shall see some of mine that will not displease you.

Cath.—As for me, I am awfully fond of riddles.

Masc.—They exercise the intelligence; I have already written four of them this morning, which I will give you to guess.

Mad.—Madrigals are pretty enough when they are neatly turned.

Masc.—That is my special talent; I am at present engaged in turning the whole Roman history into madrigals.

Mad.—Goodness gracious! that will certainly be superlatively fine; I should like to have one copy at least, if you think of publishing it.

Masc.—I promise you each a copy, bound in the handsomest manner. It does not become a man of my rank to scribble, but I do it only to serve the publishers, who are always bothering me.

Mad.—I fancy it must be a delightful thing to see one's self in print

Masc.—Undoubtedly; but, by the by, I must repeat to you some extempore verses I made yesterday at the house of a certain duchess, an acquaintance of mine. I am deuced clever at extempore verses.

Cath.—Extempore verses are certainly the very touchstone of genius.

Masc.—Listen then.

Mad.—We are all ears.

Masc.— Oh! oh! quite without heed was I,
As harmless you I chanced to spy,
Slyly your eyes
My heart surprise.
Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! I cry.

Cath.—Good Heavens! this is carried to the utmost pitch of gallantry.

Masc.—Everything I do shows it is done by a gentleman; there is nothing of the pedant about my effusions.

Mad.—They are more than two thousand miles removed from that.

Cath.—What a passion there breathes in this music! It is enough to make one die away with delight!

Mad.—There is something plaintive in it.

Masc.—Do you not think that the air perfectly well expresses the sentiment, stop thief, stop thief! And then, as if some one cried out very loud, Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop thief! Then all at once like a person out of breath, Stop thief!

Mad.—This is to understand the perfection of things, the grand perfection, the perfection of perfections. I declare it is altogether a wonderful performance. I am quite enchanted with the air and the words.

Cath.—I never yet met with anything so excellent.

Masc.—All that I do comes naturally to me, it is without study.

Mad.—Nature has treated you like a very fond mother; you are her darling child.

Masc.—How do you pass away the time, ladies?

Cath.—With nothing at all.

Mad.—Until now we have lived in a terrible dearth of amusements.

Masc.—I am at your service to attend you to the play, one of those days, if you will permit me. Indeed, a new comedy is to be acted which I should be very glad we might see together.

Mad.—There is no refusing you anything.

Masc.—I do not know whether I am deceived, but you look as if you had written some play yourself.

Mad.—Eh! there may be something in what you say.

Masc.—Ah! upon my word, we must see it. Between ourselves, I have written one which I intend to have brought out.

Cath.—Ay! to what company do you mean to give it?

Masc.—That is a very nice question, indeed. To the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne; they alone can bring things into good repute; the rest are ignorant creatures who recite their parts just as people speak in every-day life; they do not understand to mouth the verses or to pause at a beautiful passage; how can it be known where the fine lines are, if an actor does not stop at them, and thereby tell you to applaud heartily?

Cath.—Indeed! that is one way of making an audience feel the beauties of any work; things are only prized when they are well set off.

Masc.—What do you think of my top-knot, sword-knot and rosettes? Do you find them harmonize with my coat?

Cath.—Perfectly.

Masc.—Do you think the ribbon well chosen?

Mad.—Furiously well. It is real Perdridgeon.

Masc.—What do you say of my rolls?

Mad.—They look very fashionable.

Masc.—I may at least boast that they are a quarter of a yard wider than any that have been made.

Mad.—I must own I never saw the elegance of dress carried farther.

Masc.—Please to fasten the reflection of your smelling faculty upon these gloves.

Mad.—They smell awfully fine.

Cath.—I never inhaled a more delicious perfume.

Masc.—And this? (He gives them his powdered wig to smell.)

Mad.—It has the true quality odor; it titillates the nerves of the upper region most deliciously.

Masc.—You say nothing of my feathers. How do you like them?

Cath.—They are frightfully beautiful.

Masc.—Do you know that every single one of them cost me a Louis d'or? But it is my hobby to have generally everything of the very best.

Mad.—I assure you that you and I sympathize. I am furiously particular in everything I wear; I cannot endure even stockings, unless they are bought at a fashionable shop.

Such expressions as "furiously well," "frightfully beautiful," it may be explained, were among the common phraseology of the précieuses, and have their counterpart at the present time among English-speaking people, as in "awfully jolly," "awfully nice."

In the last scenes Du Croisy and La Grange appear and expose the deception of the valets, to whom they administer a sound beating. Finally Gorgibus takes to task his daughter and niece in the presence of Mascarille and Jodelet, who dubs himself viscount:

Gorgibus.—Ah! you hussies, you have put us in a nice pickle by what I can see; I have heard about your fine goings-on from those two gentlemen who just left.

Madelon.—Ah, father! they have played us a cruel trick.

Gorg.—Yes, it is a cruel trick, but you may thank your own impertinence for it, you jades. They have revenged themselves for the way you treated them; and yet, unhappy man that I am, I must put up with the affront.

Mad.—Ah! I swear we will be revenged, or I shall die in the attempt. And you, rascals, dare you remain here after your insolence?

Masc.—Do you treat a marquis in this manner? This is the way of the world; the least misfortune causes us to be slighted by those who before caressed us. Come along, brother, let us go and seek our fortune somewhere else; I perceive they love nothing here but outward show, and have no regard for worth unadorned.

In the concluding scene one of the musicians summoned for an extempore ball asks Gorgibus for their pay, which they receive in rather an unexpected manner:

Sir, as they have not paid us, we expect you to do so, for it was in this house we played.

Gorgibus.—(Beating them.) Yes, yes, I shall satisfy you; this is the coin I will pay you in. As for you, you sluts, I do not know why I should not serve you in the same way; we shall become the common talk and laughing-stock of everybody; this is what you have brought upon yourselves by your fooleries. Out of my sight and hide yourselves, you jades; go and hide yourselves forever. (Alone.) And you, that are the cause of their folly, you stupid trash, mischievous amusements for idle minds, you novels, verses, songs, sonnets, and sonatas, the devil take you all!

Les Précieuses Ridicules sounded the knell of the mania it had assailed. The worshippers at the shrine of Madame de Rambouillet resumed their baptismal names, condescended to use fairly intelligible language, and otherwise showed that the satire of Molière, with the merriment it excited, had the power to change them for the better. But, as may be supposed, they exhibited no

little resentment at the indignity to which they had been exposed. The dramatist was loudly reproached with a disregard of the courtesy due to women, of the charms of refined sentiment, of the decencies of speech and conduct. It seemed to be thought that, if such plays were to be tolerated, the end of all things was at hand. Molière was in a position to behold the storm without apprehension, but his good-nature prompted him to lessen the pain he had inflicted. "The most excellent things," he wrote in the preface to the authorized edition of the comedy, "are liable to be copied by apes, and the true précieuses are wrong to take offense at a representation of those who imitate them so badly." If the wrath of the blue-stockings was turned away by his courtesy, they could not have been very keen-sighted, as the butt of the satire was not so much the eccentricities of Madelon and Cathos as the model to which those unhappy girls conform. In truth, Molière had no intention to abandon the unofficial censorship he had assumed. His strength, as he now saw, lay in holding up, in satirical comedy, the mirror to the Paris of his time. "Henceforth," he said, "I shall do better to study the world than Menander, Terence, Plautus and the modern Italian drama."

Competition of Parisian Theatres.

In view of the approaching withdrawal of *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, Molière began to look about him for new plays by old hands. Marked as his success had been, and great as was the facility with which he wrote, he did not shut his eyes to the impolicy of allowing the fortunes

of his theatre to depend exclusively upon his own productions. From the outset, however, he attracted no dramatist of repute to his standard. The troupes of the Bourgogne and the Marais made it known that if any one wrote for the Petit Bourbon he would forfeit their good-will. No rising author could afford to disregard such a menace, while those who were in a position to do so may well have hesitated to intrust their manuscript to a body of players who, as far as tragedy was concerned, were the least efficient in the capital.

Having thus, as they thought, checkmated Molière, the players of the Bourgogne, as a means of competing with him on his chosen ground, induced a number of the actors of the Marais to join them. In their selection of novelties, however, they still manifested a preference for tragedy. Thomas Corneille, who for some years past had devoted himself to the Marais, wrote for the Bourgogne a *Darius*, perhaps the least interesting of all his works, and certainly not strong enough to bear the weight of five acts. Soon afterward, however, he redeemed this failure by *Stilicon*, a play admirable in point of construction, and forming altogether a vivid picture of Rome at a striking period of her history. Quinault was less fortunate in a *Stratonice*, while another effort of the abbé Boyer, *La Mort de Démétrius, ou le Rétablissement d'Alexandre, Roi d'Epire,* is remarkable only for the length of its title. In the way of comedy the troupe had nothing better to produce than *Le Mariage de Rien*, which may be described as an attempt to relieve the most oppressive dulness by indecency. It was from the pen of Antoine Jacob de Montfleuri, eldest son of

the actor of that name. Educated for the legal profession, ambition led him to dramatic authorship, apparently with the object of proving that the most sacred ties are fit subjects for indecent mirth on the stage. In the midst of these pursuits he espoused a daughter of Floridor, a model of every virtue.

Sganarelle.

Molière was now to show that, with all the dramatists of the day at their back, the Troupe Royale, as the players at the Bourgogne styled themselves, could not equal him in popularity. The second comedy he wrote in Paris, *Sganarelle, ou le Cocu Imaginaire,* brought large audiences to the Petit Bourbon. Working upon a story derived from an Italian farce, *Il Cornuto per Opinione,* he painted a humorous picture of bourgeoise life, brightened in many places by touches of sarcasm at the expense of popular follies. In substance the play is one of intrigue, but at least one of the characters is original and strongly individualized. Sganarelle, whose unfounded suspicions as to his wife's fidelity form the raison d'être of the plot, is a citizen of the most vulgar stamp—gross in his tastes, self-opinionated, at once cunning and credulous, too much of a poltroon to resent his fancied wrongs, but withal endowed with a certain broad humor which is irresistible. He was as new a figure on the stage as Crispin had been, but far more natural. Molière himself played the part, supported by Mdlle. Debrie as the wife, La Grange as the supposed seducer, and Duparc as the hungry valet. While inferior in all respects

except style to *Les Précieuses Ridicules, Sganarelle* at once proved popular, and, though brought out at a time when Paris was half deserted, was repeated forty times in succession; a triumph whose significance could not be misunderstood when compared with that of a really superior play introduced at a far more propitious season.

La Toison D'Or.

The period now under consideration was marked by great public rejoicings. The war between France and Spain had come to a close, and soon afterward Louis XIV espoused the Infanta Maria Theresa. In the summer, when the marriage was solemnized in the far south, and in the beginning of September, when the young king and queen entered Paris in all the pomp and pride of royalty, the enthusiasm of the populace knew no bounds. Business was entirely suspended; cheers rent the air as his majesty passed by, and at all the theatres in the capital performances were given gratuitously. Nearly every château in the country, also, assumed a festive appearance. The play-loving marquis de Sourdéac entertained more than five hundred guests at Neubourg for eight days, in the course of which a new tragedy from the pen of Corneille, *La Toison d'Or,* was played by the actors of the Marais. Picturesquely put upon the stage, with dances and music, and written throughout, like *Andromède,* with remarkable grace of imagery and diction, it was received with warm acclamations, and in due time was added to the entertainments of the capital, where, aided by the original dresses and decorations presented

to the comedians by Sourdéac, it became "the wonder of the city."

Death of Jodelet and Scarron.

While the rejoicings on account of the king's marriage were in progress the Bourgogne lost its best comic actor in the person of Jodelet. He does not seem to have been keenly regretted by his fellow-players; for the broad humor which formerly distinguished his acting had appreciably diminished as old age came upon him, and his temper, at no time very suave, had not been improved by the consciousness of his decline. Hardly had the grave closed over him, when it reopened to receive the writer whose fantastic conceptions it had been his mission to embody. From the time of the production of *Le Marquis Ridicule*, the bodily infirmities of Scarron had visibly increased, and soon it became evident that his end was near. But even the approach of death could not subdue his characteristic levity. In his last hours he dictated the most farcical of wills. He bequeathed to his wife permission to marry again, certainly never dreaming who her second husband was to be; to the Academy, power to alter the French language at will; to his servants, pensions on the many bon-mots he had made; to the two Corneilles, five hundred pounds of patience; to Boileau, in addition to some caustic epigrams against him, gangrene and the haut mal. The testator died on the same day, having only a few minutes previously remarked to his servants, who came to his bedside with tears in their eyes, "Ah, my children, I shall never make you cry as I have made you laugh!"

His body, long distorted by pain, was laid in Saint Sauveur's, where a simple tablet was erected to his memory. He left his wife in poverty, but after many attempts his friends procured for her a continuance of the pension her husband had received from Anne of Austria. It is no slight testimony to Scarron's good qualities that he won the love and esteem of the high-minded woman who bore his name. In one of her letters she speaks warmly of his probity, his disinterestedness, his kindness of nature. "He was excellent at heart," she says, "and his license I succeeded in correcting."

The Theatre Palais Royal.

The Hôtel du Petit Bourbon was now being pulled down to make way for the colonnade of the Louvre, and Molière's company, with the Italian players, received permission to take up their quarters in the superb theatre which Richelieu had fitted up in the Palais Royal for the representation of *Mirame*. Here they acted, as their opening piece, *Don Garcie de Navarre*, a comédie héroïque by their chief. In writing this play, which is of Spanish origin, Molière was evidently anxious to show that his powers as a dramatist and an actor were not restricted to the domain of light or farcical comedy. He treated in an elevated spirit the passion which *Sganarelle* had held up to ridicule. He delineated, in the character of the hero, a prince with rare qualities of head and heart, but reduced to extreme misery by a sensitively jealous nature. Every scene bears the impress of thoughtful and thorough workmanship. But the result

was not what he had a right to expect. Had the piece been converted into a tragedy, it might have succeeded by reason of the grave and stately eloquence of the writing; as it was, the bulk of the audience, having assembled in the expectation of seeing another *Précieuses* or *Sganarelle*, were led in their disappointment to pronounce it gloomy and uninteresting. Thus far French audiences had been accustomed only to the lighter forms of comedy, and a play such as *Don Garcie*, which was somewhat of the cloak and sword order of the Spanish drama, was entirely foreign to their tastes.

It was about this time that Molière and his troupe received orders to give a performance of *L'Étourdi* and *Les Précieuses Ridicules* at the Louvre in the presence of Mazarin, who, followed by the king, was wheeled on a sofa into the salle in which the players appeared. It is somewhat remarkable that an amusement relentlessly persecuted by the church of Rome should have been resorted to by a cardinal in what he must have known were his last hours. The distress with which the minister contemplated the approach of death was also relieved by the fact that something had been done toward naturalizing the opera in France. Two years before, the abbé Perrin, a hanger-on of Gaston D'Orleans, had composed a work of this kind in French, *La Pastorale,* to which music was set by Lambert, intendant de la musique to Anne of Austria. It was sung at Issy, and Mazarin had it played more than once in the presence of the king. The innovation, however, did not find favor except in a very limited circle, and even those who appreciated the opera maintained that the genius of the French language would

not lend itself to the purpose; nor do we find to-day anything of superior merit, except in comic opera.

Armande Béjart.

Molière, who seems to have found in Mazarin a zealous admirer, now proceeded to write a comedy in which a young actress lately added to his company might be introduced. This was Armande Clarie Elizabeth Béjart, a younger sister of Madeleine, to whose care she had been confided in early life, growing to womanhood—for woman she already was—under the eyes of Molière. Charmed with her girlish graces, he took upon himself the cost of her education, and few tasks gave him greater pleasure than that of preparing her for the stage. Her portrait has been painted for us in one of his own dialogues. "Her eyes," he says, "are not large, but are full of fire—the most brilliant, the most piercing, the most moving that can be seen. Her mouth is large, but has attractions peculiar to itself. She is not tall, but her movements are easy and elegant. She affects a nonchalance in her speech and deportment, but there is grace in all, and her manners have a nameless charm. Her wit is of the finest and most delicate kind; her conversation is delightful; and if she is capricious, as I admit she is—well, everything becomes and must be borne with from the fair." This description is substantially confirmed by contemporary testimony, from which we further learn that she had an extremely pretty voice, sang with taste in both French and Italian, dressed gracefully, was a mistress of the art of filling up the intervals of her part

on the stage with expressive by-play, and could impersonate coquettish or satirical women to perfection.

L'École des Maris.

The comedy designed by Molière in the interest of his youthful comrade was produced under the title of *L'École des Maris.* It threw all his previous achievements into the shade, whether as regards character, plot, situation or dialogue. In selecting his materials he would appear to have had in mind the *Adelphi* of Plautus and Lopé de Vega's *Discreta Enamorada.* His obligation to these works, however, was slight, as a comparison of them with *L'École* will show. Two brothers, Ariste and Sganarelle, with Molière as the latter, are respectively guardians of two sisters, Léonor and Isabelle, the former personated by Armande Béjart. Each intends to espouse his ward, but treats her in a different way. Ariste, reposing implicit confidence in Léonor, concedes her full liberty of action; Sganarelle, suspicious and tyrannical, seeks to cut off Isabelle from all intercourse with the world. The wisdom of Ariste is justified by the event; but the other suitor, in addition to forfeiting any regard Isabelle may have had for him, is made a go-between for the benefit of a more favored lover, whose name is Valèrie. In many points this groundwork is new, and for all that constitutes the excellence of the play, especially the robust manliness and good sense of Ariste, the delicacy with which Isabelle is exhibited in difficult circumstances, and the piquancy of the character of the soubrette, as played

by Madeleine Béjart, Molière was indebted only to his own genius. For the rest, *L'École des Maris* was triumphantly successful. Loret tells us that it became the "delight of all Paris." Not long afterward it was represented by the same players before the court at Vaux, where, as in the capital, it added to the reputation of the dramatist.

Molière's reputation was already high enough to compensate him for the sacrifices he had made to obtain it. In the comedy of character and incident he had left Corneille far behind, at the same time infusing into his dialogue a vivacity and grace not to be found in that of the author of *Cinna* and *Polyeucte*. Indeed, it is not too much to say that *L'École des Maris* gave its author a place in the very foremost rank of comic poets, and from this time a new play from his pen was looked forward to with the keenest interest. Still more rapid, perhaps, was the progress he made at court. It required less intelligence than Louis XIV possessed to perceive that Molière would add to the glories of the reign just begun, and his admiration of the dramatist was not improbably blended with a feeling of strong personal regard for one whose noble qualities of heart were as conspicuous as his intellectual gifts, whose conversation and manners were those of a lettered gentleman, and who bore himself in the presence of his sovereign with a deference wholly free from the taint of servility. In the words of Bazin, "Molière was now to enjoy something more than a disdainful protection at the hands of the king. From the moment these two men—the one a monarch freed from leading-strings, the other an unrivalled comedian but still

timid moralist—became well acquainted, a tacit understanding subsisted between them—an understanding that the latter might dare everything, with full assurance of protection, upon the sole condition of respecting and amusing the former. No public treaty to which the faith of a monarch is solemnly pledged could have been fulfilled more sincerely; at no time, and in no circumstances, was the shield thrown over the poet withdrawn. He was no poor knight-errant, pursuing his mission at his own risk and peril, exposed to vengeance and apprehensive of being abandoned to his fate. He received confidence and strength from a caprice, for once enlightened, of sovereign power; his genius gave him all the rest."

The Court of Louis XIV.

Before long, as a consequence of the esteem in which Molière was held at the Louvre, the drama assumed a new importance and dignity. Emancipated by the death of Mazarin from even the semblance of tutelage, Louis XIV, already distinguished by the calculating sagacity of a practical statesman, became the real as well as the nominal master of France, and it is no mere figure of speech to say that from this moment he was the cynosure of all eyes in Europe. For one thing, he made his court one of the most splendid on record. It seemed to comprise all that was picturesque and great in the life of the nation he represented. The nobles, humbled by Richelieu as a political force, but as little able to lay aside their old insolence of demeanor as to improve their morals, came from their châteaus to bask

in the sunshine of royalty; men of approved genius, no matter in what field they had shown it, were invited to swell the throng on a footing of something like equality. His majesty became the centre of a never-ending circle of edifying or frivolous pleasure, although he devoted himself for several hours a day to the business of the State. Palace life seemed to be made up of fêtes, pageants, theatrical performances, presentations and the most ingenious forms of enjoyment. "In short," says Madame de Sévigné, "it was a very whirlwind: illuminations and jewels, dresses faced and embroidered with gold, dissipation and idle compliments, civilities without thought, feet entangled in trains, traffic congested, lighted torches, people crushed under the wheels of coaches."

It is unnecessary to descant upon the widespread misery which the profusion of the king, joined to his insatiable thirst for conquest and military fame, brought upon the country at large. From the outset, however, his reign was fraught with benefits to civilization. Neglected as his education had been, he took a keen and practical interest in literature and art, especially when, as in the representation of a great play, they went hand in hand. Until recently, indeed, the theatrical diversions of the court consisted almost exclusively of Benserade's allegorical ballets, in which his majesty, with other members of the royal family, not infrequently appeared. But Molière aroused in him a taste for stage productions of a higher order; tragedy and comedy figured in most of the fêtes which he gave or attended, and the drama could not but derive additional lustre

from the homage paid to it by a prince who personified the France of his time in so imposing a fashion as to make himself an object of reverence to his plundered and down-trodden people.

Les Fâcheux.

Molière was now to be associated with an incident of historic interest. Fouquet, heir-presumptive to Mazarin, entertained the court at Vaux, when *Les Fâcheux*, a comedy in three acts, was played in a theatre created under the stately fir trees in the park. It may well be believed that murmurs of surprise and delight were heard among the brilliant assemblage in the parterre as the curtain rose. *Mirame* itself was not put upon the stage with so much magnificence as this new play of Molière's. The one scene of the piece, representing a garden, had been designed by Lenôtre, painted by Lebrun and ornamented with sculptured fountains, all in play, by Puget or Couston. Contrived by Torelli, who acted as stage manager, a huge rock in the background transformed itself into a shell, from which a naiad—Armande Béjart—came forth to deliver a prologue written by Pelisson.

But the admiration excited by this charming picture was soon to be displaced by a different feeling, at least among the bulk of the audience. *Les Fâcheux*, which had been "conceived, written, and got ready for representation" in the short space of fifteen days, was found to be a refined but incisive satire upon the very class of which that audience was mainly composed. In one of

Scaramouche's farces some amusement had been created by the spectacle of a lover interrupted by a succession of insufferable bores on his way to a rendezvous. Molière made use in his new piece of a similar groundwork, at the same time turning the figures of those who beset his hero, Eraste—played by himself—into full-length portraits of typical personages in the king's train, and using them as stalking-horses for ridicule upon more than one conceit and folly. Now we have a beribboned and feathered gallant noisily taking a seat on the stage in the sight of the audience, while the performance is going on; now an amateur composer insists upon singing some dance music he has written; now a gamester pertinaciously enters into a description of a point in piquet; now a pair of précieuses are anxious to know whether a lover ought to be jealous; now a pedant is anxious that a petition regarding himself shall be presented to the king; now a duellist wishes to prove himself cunning of fence by defending friends from imaginary attacks; to crown all, a bore inflicts upon us an account of having been himself bored.

In writing such a piece, of course, the dramatist acted upon an assumption that his temerity would be applauded by the king, who, to say nothing of his delight in annoying others, had been animated from boyhood by a desire to bring the authority of the nobles within narrow limits. Nor did this assumption prove groundless. His majesty readily entered into the humor of the piece, chiefly by reason of the speechless dismay and confusion shown by many of his courtiers under the castigation inflicted upon them from the stage. His

pleasure, indeed, may be said to have increased in proportion to their pain. The only fault he found with the satire was that it did not go far enough. "M. de Molière," he whispered at the close, looking toward Soiecourt, the master of the hounds, "there is an 'original' you might well copy." Molière was not a master of the phraseology of the chase, but a brief conversation with the proposed victim taught him as much of it as would serve his purpose, and in the dead of night, after the guests had retired, he added to his list of bores the diverting character of the huntsman Dorante. Thus strengthened, *Les Fâcheux*, which presents a combination of two species of plays hitherto unknown but henceforward popular in France—the comédie-ballet and the pièce à tiroir—was performed at Fontainebleau and at the Palais Royal. It need hardly be said that the Bourgeoisie laughed most heartily at these burlesques of their superiors. The indignation of the latter was naturally very great, but as the piece was dedicated to the highest personage in the realm, and that in a tone which indicated a sense of perfect security, they deemed it prudent, at least for the present, to hold their peace on the subject.

Boursault.

The Hôtel de Bourgogne had nothing better to counterbalance the attraction of *Les Fâcheux* than two invertebrate tragedies by Thomas Corneille, *Pyrrhus* and *Maximian*. The afterpiece to each was *Le Médecin Volant*, the first essay in dramatic composition of a ris-

ing young writer. In 1651, having arrived at the mature age of thirteen, Edmond Boursault left his native village to push his fortune in Paris. He could neither read nor write, for his father, an illiterate soldier, was determined not to be outshone in the matter of education by his children. How the raw country lad contrived to keep his head above water in Paris we are not told, but it is certain that by dint of intense industry he repaired his want of education, and at this time he could write French with a purity and elegance which any scholar in the college might have envied. His first important enterprise was a gazette in rhyme, in imitation of Loret. Its success was greater than could have been anticipated; he was commanded to present a copy of each issue in person to the king, and a pension of two thousand livres was conferred upon him. Before long, however, this encouraging prospect was overclouded. In one of his gazettes, at the instance of the duc de Guise, now his steadiest patron, he indulged in a little pleasantry at the expense of a Capuchin who, while slumbering in the shop of a seamstress, had been converted by irreverent hands into something like an effigy of Guy Fawkes. The court was hugely diverted by the story, but the queen's Spanish confessor induced her to regard it as a mark of disrespect to religion, and to appease her resentment the king suppressed the work, cancelled the pension, and would have sent the author to the bastile, if Condé had not said a word in his favor.

Like Molière, Boursault was to learn that there must be no joking at the expense of the priesthood, and that he who sought to bring religion into disrespect would

do so at his peril. The drastic lesson that had been taught proved admonitory, at least for the time being.

Molière's Marriage.

At this time was being enacted at the Palais Royal a pathetic drama of real life. For the last eight or nine years Catherine Debrie had been Molière's wife in all but name, now consoling him under repeated disappointments, anon supporting him in his aspirations by intelligent sympathy, and generally making his happiness the chief, if not the sole object of her existence. He was the god of her idolatry—a god at whose shrine no self-sacrifice could be too great. Nor had he failed to appreciate this devotion; his attachment to her increased as time passed away, and would have led him to give her his hand if she had been free to accept it. But in the young actress just added to the company she was to find a too powerful rival. His friendly interest in Armande Béjart involuntarily ripened into a warmer sentiment. It was in vain that his better judgment warned him not to place his peace of mind at the mercy of a girl without fixed character, predisposed to frivolity, and nearly twenty-five years younger than himself. To use his own words, "It is not reason that regulates love," and the passion he conceived for her seemed to become a part of his very being. In extreme anguish, but without uttering a syllable of reproach, Mdlle. Debrie unostentatiously quitted what she had made a home in the best sense of the word, and at the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, from which the signal for the St.

Bartholomew massacre had been given, Molière and Armande were married in the presence of his father, M. Poquelin, of the mother of the Béjarts, and most of the players of the Palais Royal.

It was soon manifest to the dramatist that his infatuation had led him into a terrible error. Instead of becoming what his fancy had painted, an affectionate and sympathetic companion, Armande showed that she had married him only from motives of self-interest. He found her to be heartless, vain, giddy and shallow-minded. She repaid his tenderness with undisguised indifference, saw nothing in his work except a means of gratifying her love of display, and took advantage of the liberty he gave her to become one of the most notorious coquettes on the outskirts of the court. If he complained of her conduct she would upbraid him as a tyrant or resort to impudent levity. Being remonstrated with on account of some undue familiarity with Lauzun, she protested that the scandal which associated his name with hers had no foundation, as it was the comte de Guiche she preferred. Molière, unhappily for himself, was of too sensitive a nature not to suffer intensely from the blow he had received. His life from this time was one of almost continuous torture. But his love for Armande seemed to increase as her worthlessness became more apparent; and accordingly, endeavoring to persuade himself that her faults were due in great measure to the thoughtlessness of youth, he left no stone unturned—with what success we shall see in due course—to inspire her with sentiments resembling his own. Apart from other objections, Molière was

many years her senior, so many that real sympathy between them was impossible.

Sertorius.

A few days after the solemnization of this ill-assorted marriage, a tragedy by Corneille, *Sertorius*, was produced at the Marais, whose players had won his confidence by the effect with which they had represented *La Toison d'Or*. "Here," writes the once great dramatist, as though to show how completely he could stultify himself, "you will find neither tenderness, bursts of passion, elaborate descriptions nor pathetic narratives." In truth, *Sertorius* was another political tragedy, an historical dissertation in dramatic form. Viewed in this light, no doubt, it was deserving of praise. It was fully equal to the requirements of the subject, and the scene between Sertorius and Pompey in the third act had sufficient strength to give the piece a firm hold on public favor. In the military details, it should be added, the author was never at fault. "Where," asked one of the spectators, the great Turenne, "where can Corneille, an advocate and man of letters, have gained so much knowledge of the art of war as *Sertorius* displays?"

Death of Boisrobert.

The aged poet was one of the last surviving members of the group of dramatists who had borne the yoke of Richelieu. Claude de l'Étoile and Colletet had passed away, soon afterward followed by Boisrobert—of late

years extremely corpulent, with his small eyes deeply sunk in his face. In most of the salons it was felt that Paris could better have spared a greater man than the virtual founder of the Académie Française. His numerous backslidings, if ever seriously thought of, were forgiven in consideration of the wit which had commended him to the notice of Richelieu, and which remained with him to the end. Nevertheless, those backslidings were of a nature to exclude him from the society of good men and true. He had lifted himself out of obscurity by persistent toadyism, had sought to disguise his weakness as a dramatist by plagiarisms sometimes involving a direct breach of confidence, and from the outset of his career had presented an example of about everything an abbé ought not to be. His liaison with one woman was so notorious that a friend ventured to remonstrate with him for disregarding his vows. "Is not the lady very ugly?" he asked. "She is." "Surely that proves my innocence." "On the contrary," retorted the friend, "her ugliness only aggravates your offense." Brought to the verge of the grave, however, the clerical rake began to fear that he had not regulated his doings with "sufficient exactitude," and it was in a profoundly repentant mood that he went to his long account.

Mdlle. Desœillets.

The Troupe Royal was now reinforced by a new and talented actress in the person of Mdlle. Desœillets. Nothing is known of the newcomer until she joined a provincial company, but it is probable that she was of

good birth, had received a liberal education and was playing under an assumed name. Both on and off the stage she displayed a refinement which must have been engrafted upon her in childhood. From the moment she took the lead at the Bourgogne she won the affection of her audience. More than forty years of age, she yet retained a very youthful appearance, and, if not beautiful in the ordinary sense of the term, was so picturesque that the eye followed her with pleasure, while the sensibilities of the heart were awakened by her utterances. Her acting was distinguished by pathos, finesse, earnestness, everything except the power needed to give due effect to characters like Camille and Cléopatre. Her private life, moreover, was dignified by true womanliness. Bright without levity, benevolent without ostentation, quick to acknowledge merit in others, she may be compared in all respects save one to the unhappy lady who was now the observed of all observers at court—Louise de la Vallière.

L'École des Femmes.

In order, perhaps, to counteract this rival attraction, as well as to find relief from his domestic woes, Molière wrote *L'École des Femmes*, which appeared at the Palais Royal as a Christmas novelty. It was the first time he had taken up the pen since Armande became his wife, and it is remarkable that, in his new comedy, as in the one produced when his passion for her was growing upon him, he resorted to the ethics of marriage for his materials. The chief personage in the piece,

Arnolphe, a middle-aged roué, played by Molière himself, has arrived at the conclusion, after a wide experience of womankind, that the best safeguard of a wife's honor is extreme ignorance, that if she is not to befool her husband she must be a fool herself. No girl should know anything except how to sew, pray, spin and love the man to whom she is pledged. Her library should consist of only two books, the *Bible* and the *Maxims of Marriage.* Nor does he fail to reduce these theories to rigid practice. Intending to espouse his ward Agnes —Mdlle. Debrie—he has her brought up at a convent school in complete seclusion. But the young lady, while a type of intelligent simplicity, unconsciously outwits him; she bestows her affections upon the gallant Horace, and the guardian, after being made the confident of the latter, is eventually left out in the cold. The character of Arnolphe is finely contrasted with that of Chrysalde, who utters a series of noble sentiments in favor of the cultivation of the intellect in woman. It has been hastily assumed by some writers that Molière and his wife are before us in Arnolphe and Agnes. Far, indeed, is this from the truth, Armande bearing as little resemblance to the unsophisticated ward as her husband did to the tyrannical guardian. It is not improbable, however, that some of the most emotional passages in the play derived additional intensity of feeling and expression from his own experiences. In these, no doubt, the dramatist himself, rather than the character, is speaking. For a similar reason his acting may have gained in force and tenderness. However that may be, *L'École des Femmes*, especially toward the end,

was pervaded with a depth of sensibility which he had not previously displayed, and which, joined as it was to unequalled dramatic excellence, exerted a strong fascination over most of the audience.

The success was not without alloy. In some of the incidents and speeches of the new comedy, it would seem, the précieuses and the fâcheux saw a means of bringing odium upon their audacious assailant, and the temptation was not to be resisted. Vaguely denouncing the comedy as bad, they insisted that in writing it he had ridiculed manuals of devotion, sneered at the doctrine of punishment after death, caricatured the forms of a sermon, and degraded national morals and the national language.

Industriously repeated every night in the salons, the criticisms on *L'École des Femmes* were soon caught up outside, especially by those who are ever ready to calumniate an unusually successful man. But the dramatist's assailants were not allowed to have it all their own way. Boileau came forth against them, and his prowess as a satirist, now placed beyond question by the *Adieux*, insured attention to what he said. Molière's cause was also espoused in a pamphlet entitled *La Guerre Comique*. Here, as elsewhere, it was conclusively shown that he had not been guilty of either immodesty or impiety; but this by no means put an end to the controversy.

Critique de L'École.

Molière replied to his detractors by the *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*, written as a dramatic dialogue, but

acted as a regular comedy. In this work he shows a self-command which may well excite surprise. Intense as was his provocation—for the jeers flung at him on account of his wife's misconduct had touched him to the quick—the play is free from any trace of malice. He never oversteps the limits of good taste; but within those limits he produced one of the most telling satires that was ever prepared for the stage. Climène, a précieuse, a coxcomb marquis, and Lysidas, a poetaster, successively assail *L'École des Femmes* in a conversation with three clear-headed persons—Uranie, Elise and Dorante. Climène's sense of decorum has been greatly shocked by certain passages in the play. "Nay," says Uranie, "you must have a sharp nose for secluded impropriety; I confess I saw none." "So much the worse for you." "So much the better, I think; I take things as they are presented to me, and do not turn them round to look for what should not be seen. A woman's modesty does not consist in grimacing. Nothing is more ridiculous than the delicacy which takes offense and gives criminal meaning to the most innocent words. The other night this affectation was carried so far by some ladies in the theatre that a lackey in the pit declared their ears to be more chaste than the rest of their persons." The marquis denounces the piece as "detestable, to the last degree detestable;" and Lysidas declaims against it because it violates all the rules of art. Dorante, without any want of respect for those rules, holds that a comedy justifies its existence when it pleases the audience, and Uranie is of opinion that the men best versed in Aristotle and Horace are those who write comedies which no one

can admire. For her part, she does not inquire whether the rules of Aristotle forbid her to laugh. "It is very strange," she adds, "that you writers always condemn the plays which every one goes to see and never speak well of any except those which fail." The defenders of *L'École* have the advantage in the argument throughout, one of them remarking that the author did not care how much his comedies were abused, so long as the town came to see them. Thanks to its wit and sarcasm, the *Critique* was represented more than thirty times in succession, a sure sign that Molière had not overestimated his strength in placing this singular piece before his audience. Devisé replied with a play similar in form and title, but it produced little effect, for, unlike the man whom he had assailed, he could not keep his temper, trying to compensate for the absence of wit by an abundance of coarse invective.

L'Impromptu de Versailles.

Louis XIV, who took a keen interest in the controversy, requested Molière to bring his assailants on the stage at the newly erected palace at Versailles, and this he did in a play entitled *L'Impromptu de Versailles,* before an audience consisting largely of his intended victims. The chief weight of the satire fell upon the players of the Bourgogne, the author, besides making them feel his sarcasms, taking occasion to imitate some of their peculiarities. The piece was afterward transferred to the Palais Royal, where it caused a general roar of merriment, greatly to the discomfiture of those who were made

the objects of his ridicule. Molière's victims turned upon him with a rancor which plainly showed that his shafts were quivering in the centre of their mark. They replied with two pieces, neither of which was remarkable except for its abuse, and this they carried to such an extreme that few were disposed to make common cause with them. During one of the performances Molière entered the theatre, and, taking a seat at the side of the stage, eyed the movements of his mimics with a languid and half-amused curiosity which must have greatly disconcerted them.

Tartuffe.

But a graver subject of satire was now to occupy the attention of Molière. No sign of the times was more conspicuous than the reaction against the anti-theological spirit which had found expression in the writings of Théophile Viaud, and later of Descartes. Intensified by the strife between Jesuits and Jansenists, this reaction soon bore down all opposition and the voice of skepticism was drowned in a chorus of real or affected acquiescence in the teachings of Revelation. In all quarters the odor of incense was to be perceived; the most worldly conversation was interlarded with images from and allusions to sacred books; piety again came into fashion, and it seemed as though the absorbing faith of the middle ages had once more returned. But the revival was attended with serious evils; the vice of self-seeking hypocrisy increased in proportion to the spread of virtue, and France was filled with men endeavoring to make a gain of godliness, even using religion as

ELMIRE CONVINCES ORGON
After an original painting by A. J. Mazerolle

Orgon (Elmire's husband stopping Tartuffe): "*You are too eager in your amorous transports, and you ought not to be so impetuous.*"

TARTUFFE.—MOLIERE.

a cloak for designs which involve the dishonor of families.

To the task of checking this evil Molière now applied his keenest shafts of satire. In *Tartuffe*, a comedy in five acts, he relates the story of an attempt, by an irreclaimable hypocrite, to destroy the domestic happiness of a citizen who, charmed by his seeming piety, has received him as a prominent guest. In painting such a portrait, this lively assailant of Parisian foibles was in a new element, though one that proved to him perfectly congenial. His genius had a serious side, and on that side he was unquestionably at his best, the character of Tartuffe being drawn with a strength and precision which few dramatists have equalled. By a process of self-revelation, and almost without the aid of dialogue or soliloquy, the heart of a man who could neither desire nor endure any close investigation is discovered and ascertained in all its intricacies, with the certainty of navigators tracing the line and bearings of an unknown shore. In the delineation and grouping of the other personages, also, the instincts and power of a great artist are clearly revealed; nor does the author fail to avoid the pitfalls inseparable from such a subject. True religion is never confounded with hypocrisy, but is upheld with a warmth that suggests the fervor of his own religious sentiment, which shows his characteristic hatred of imposture in any shape.

The first three acts were produced during the fêtes held at Versailles, nominally in honor of the queen and Anne of Austria, but really to please the maid of honor who had now become the king's mistress. It would be

impossible to exaggerate the effect produced by this gruesome picture upon its first beholders—upon the mass of revelers who, resplendent in masquerade attire, filled the theatre in every part. Not only did the entertainment differ entirely from what they had expected, but the author, who seems to have been born to make the world laugh at itself, showed that he had also the power to confront them with one of the deepest mysteries of human existence.

The king at once perceived the genius displayed in *Tartuffe*, and was also clear-headed enough to see that it was aimed exclusively against hypocrisy; but from the moment it made its appearance in Paris another and heavier storm began to rage over the head of the dramatist. According to his assailants, he had at length thrown aside the mask altogether, and under pretense of exposing hypocrisy was seeking to undermine the foundations of religion itself. Roullés, the curé of Saint Barthélemy, took upon himself to damn the author of *Tartuffe* on his own authority, and another virulent denouncer of the play was the bishop of Autun, supposed to be the original of the stage impostor. The agitation steadily increased until the king deemed it prudent to prohibit the performance in Paris of a play which he had unreservedly approved.

Irritated by his disappointment, Molière registered a vow that, sooner or later, the interdiction should be set aside, and before long awakened such a friendly interest in his drama among the leaders of society as to induce the king to withdraw his prohibition. This was made the more easy by the anxiety of the fashionable world

to taste of the forbidden fruit, the salons competing with each other in their inducements to have *Tartuffe* read in the presence of a select audience; for "no greater pleasure," they said, "could be afforded them." Molière complied with many of these requests, inasmuch as they gave him an opportunity of dispelling the numberless misapprehensions in regard to his play, and of inspiring a wish to see it performed on the stage. His first private reading was before the pope's legate and a party of prelates, who, imagining *Tartuffe* to be a covert satire against the Jansenists—an idea which, however erroneous, the author took no pains to dispel—decided very strongly in its favor. The Jansenists placed on it an entirely different construction, while Molière, adroitly answering the questions put to him, managed to win over both sides, and that without suffering any twinges of conscience.

Infidelity of Molière's Wife

In the course of these readings Molière suffered a blow which must have made him indifferent for a time to the fate of his play. Intoxicated by the success she had achieved, Armande had now disregarded the first of her obligations as a wife, one of those who were supposed to have corrupted her being the abbé de Richelieu. How keenly the husband felt his dishonor can hardly be told. Worthless as Armande was, she had aroused in him a lifelong passion, and he was of too fine and sensitive a nature to regard her faithlessness with the affected indifference and sangfroid of a man of the

world in the seventeenth century. At this painful juncture he formed a resolution that was at once dignified and generous. He would cease to treat her as a wife, but would not deprive her of the protection of his home. In other words, they would live in the same house, but would lead separate lives, and meet only at the theatre. This condition of affairs, however, he could not long endure, and in order to avoid meeting her unnecessarily, he took a villa at Auteuil, one of the prettiest suburbs of Paris, where he lived apart.

Apart from his wife's infidelity, Molière's worldly position at this moment was all that he could have desired. Not only did his popularity in Paris seem to increase with each successive day, but the favor of the court, which to him was a matter of paramount importance, was proof against every attempt to diminish it. On one occasion, it is said, he was invited by the king to join him at table —an honor rarely bestowed in the reign of Louis XIV.

V.

Racine and Molière.

While the splendid genius of Corneille was too evidently waning, and the brilliance of Molière was still at the zenith of its power, a new radiance dawned on the dramatic horizon. Racine, less original perhaps than Corneille, yet more uniform in excellence and even more conformed to the inmost spirit of French tragedy, rose to maintain in the mimic world of the theatre the glory of the reign of Louis XIV. To Corneille he bears the same relation that in English poetry the polished Pope bears to the more vigorous Dryden, or that in Greek tragedy Sophocles bears to Æschylus. His finely-wrought masterpieces are the typical examples of the French classic tragedy.

Jean Racine was born in 1639 at La Ferte-Milon, where his father was controller of the salt magazine and of the salt tax. Becoming an orphan in his fourth year, the boy was taken in charge by near relatives, and at the age of eleven or twelve was sent to the collège de Beauvais, proceeding thence to the monastery at Port Royal, whither his grandmother and two aunts had retired to devote themselves to piety and the education of youth.

Here he remained about four years, learning Greek from the sacristan, Claude Lancelot, who came to treat him as a son, and Latin and the humanities from Nicole. At times, it is to be feared, he proved a somewhat untractable pupil. Lancelot, having surprised him while reading the *Aethiopica*, a story hardly suited to one of his age, angrily threw the book into the fire; whereupon the youth immediately procured another copy, read it to the last line, and then, carrying it to the sacristan, sullenly remarked, "You may burn this as well." But impatience of restraint was not accompanied by a disinclination to study; on the contrary, his progress was rapid enough to awaken sanguine hopes as to his future. In the matter of Greek scholarship, it would seem, he learned more than Lancelot could teach him, burying himself in the woods to pore over Euripides and Sophocles, until he had acquired a deep insight into the predominating spirit of their plays. Bidding adieu to Port Royal, with its picturesque and venerable associations, he entered the collège d'Harcourt, there to study philosophy, being now the ward of a cousin, Nicholas Vitart, financial secretary to the duc de Luynes. A year or two later, when urged to choose a profession, he directed his attention by turns to law and theology. He had no taste for either; but in the end, probably at the solicitation of his friends at Port Royal, who did not wish to lose sight of so promising a pupil, he undertook to prepare himself for the church. Theology, as we shall see, was the profession to which Racine finally devoted himself, but at this time his tastes inclined to literature, and especially to dramatic literature, though well aware

that his powers were not yet sufficiently developed for the task.

Early Poems.

It soon became evident that he had no sympathy with his self-elected calling. Established for a time in Paris as an assistant to his guardian, he gave himself up to doubtful pleasures, fell into bad company, and in some of his letters went so far as to ridicule the pious forms of expression adopted by the Port Royalists. Moreover, new ideas and aspirations took possession of his mind. In honor of the royal marriage he wrote an ode entitled *La Nymphe de la Seine*, unquestionably possessed of merit though disfigured by many faults. Chapelain was then arbiter of the royal bounties to men of letters, and Vitart sent him the manuscript. "Many of the stanzas," he wrote in reply, "could not be improved. If the few passages I have marked are set right—especially one in which Tritons are placed in a river—the ode will be a fine one." Racine, of course, made all the alterations suggested, and on the recommendation of Chapelain he received one hundred louis d'or from Colbert in the name of the king. This unexpected success disposed him to rely upon literature, but soon afterward, probably to avoid reproaches from Port Royal as to his mode of living and pursuits, he became the guest at Uzes of his mother's brother, Antoine Sconin, the vicar-general in that town, who wished to find him a benefice. Here he wrote his notes on the *Odyssey* and the *Olympiads*—a proof that he did not allow his mind

to be too much exercised upon theological subjects. In less than eighteen months he returned to Paris, and again took to authorship.

Fortune continued to smile on the efforts of the young poet. For writing an ode on the recovery of the grand monarque from an attack of measles, he was awarded a pension of six hundred francs—a sum then sufficient for a bare maintenance. His next effusion was on a more poetical theme, *La Renommée aux Muses*, which Boileau criticised with so much good sense and kindness that the author sought an introduction, and the two men became fast friends. The elder used to boast that he had taught the other how to write verse, which was probably the fact. Be that as it may, Racine soon addressed himself to one of the most trying forms of composition. He wrote for the Bourgogne a tragedy entitled *Amasie*, which was first accepted and then declined. Molière gave him more encouragement, and was rewarded by finding in *La Thébaïde*, a drama prepared at his suggestion, more than one sign of imaginative power, with depth of sensibility and command of language. By this time, still pressed by the Port Royalists, Racine had become prior of Epinay.

La Thébaïde and Othon.

The players of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, who for more than a year had produced but few novelties, were spurred by the success of *La Thébaïde* to fresh exertions. In the previous summer, as a means of adding to the attractiveness of a fête at Fontainebleau, Cor-

neille had produced a play named *Othon*, founded on an intrigue at the court of Otho. He elaborated the picture with the most patient care, writing the third act again and again, and composing for it about twice as many lines as he ultimately adopted. Nor was he without reward. His audience listened to all with the profoundest respect, and innumerable were the compliments bestowed on his work. Interesting enough in a political sense, especially as the problem on which it turned was treated with dignity and eloquence, *Othon* contained little or nothing to attract a mixed audience. Evidently perceiving this, the Troupe Royal showed no haste to put it on the boards, and when finally produced, its career was of the briefest.

A Dangerous Theme.

The subject of the next play brought forward at the Palais Royal was suggested by the company to their leader. Hitherto, except in the land of its birth, the legend of Don Juan had been strangely misrepresented, and it was not without some reluctance that Molière entered upon his task. His *Don Juan* would have to be a comedy of the Tartuffe species, and it was by no means easy to arouse anything like serious interest in what had served as materials for still popular burlesques. Nevertheless, it may be doubted whether a more grateful theme could have fallen to his lot.

In the preparation of his groundwork he borrowed freely from Tellez's *El Burlador de Sevilla* and its numerous progeny, adding piquant details of his own in-

vention, and excluding incidents which would be out of place in a philosophical drama. Nearly every scene is irradiated by his distinctive humor, but the tone of the piece, as a whole, is precisely what its nature required. As for the figure of Don Juan, it stands out in the finest colors, in the strongest conceivable relief. Molière was too great a dramatist to content himself with describing such a man through the mouths of other personages. His hero, if hero he may be called, reveals himself with a candor and pointedness which remind us of Iago. His speeches are invariably in the spirit of his actions; he leaves us in no doubt as to the principles by which his conduct is governed; he lays bare the primary anatomy of his soul; he believes nothing, hopes nothing, fears nothing, and insolently proclaims his want of faith in the efficacy of prayer. In a new scene, meeting a mendicant who passes his life in prayer, but who is dying of starvation, he tosses him a louis d'or "for the sake of humanity." Moreover, he is superbly indifferent to all moral considerations; he is unmoved by the anguish of the too-credulous beings whose lives he has wrecked, and is perpetually on the watch for what he terms fresh conquests.

Not the least characteristic of the new scenes in the piece is one in which the libertine appears with a pretty rustic on either arm, alternately assuring each, of course in a tone low enough to escape the ears of the other, that she is the sole mistress of his heart. Nor has remonstrance the slightest effect upon him. In reply to a long and eloquent speech from his father, to the effect that birth is nothing without virtue, that it is

not sufficient for a nobleman to simply bear the title and arms of nobility, he coolly replies: "Sir, if you take a chair you will speak more at your ease." But the climax of his iniquity is not yet reached. He finds it expedient—and here a shaft is aimed against those who had joined in the clamor against Tartuffe—to assume a sanctimonious aspect. "For," he says, "the profession of a hypocrite has marvellous advantages just now. Hypocrisy is a vice in vogue, and all vices in vogue pass for virtues. The imposture is always respected, and even when detected is not to be condemned. Every other human vice is amenable to censure, and may be attacked boldly. Hypocrisy has the privilege of stopping the world's mouth, and enjoys the repose of sovereign impunity. I shall not abandon my pleasures; I simply hide them. I espouse the interests of heaven, and under this convenient pretext shall persecute my enemies, accuse them of impiety and raise up against them those unthinking zealots who, without knowing anything of the merits of the case, will declaim against them in public, heap injuries upon them and condemn them to perdition on their own private authority." The significance of this last sentence, to which Sganarelle listens with mingled horror and consternation, is not to be mistaken. Throughout the play Don Juan is never permitted to enlist our sympathies. His courage, his esprit, his elegant and chivalrous bearing—these and other natural or acquired graces—are attributed to him simply to bring his character within the bounds of humanity, to account for the fascinations he exercises over women, and to deepen, by force of con-

trast, the moral blackness which they appear to relieve. In this portraiture, the most philosophical yet witnessed on the French stage, the genius of Molière probably found its loftiest and most artistic expression.

Le Festin de Pierre.

Under the name of *Le Festin de Pierre*—a title which, meaningless as it was, had acquired too great commercial value from long usage to be discarded by the practical Molière—the play so written was presented at the Palais Royal. Before the curtain rose it must have been evident that the piece would be criticised in a hostile spirit. The audience included a large sprinkling of the class which execrated the author as an enemy of religion. In their belief his object in reintroducing Don Juan on the stage was to exhibit atheism in an alluring light. And, naturally enough, they found what they were predisposed to find. In the self-revealing speeches of Don Juan they saw only a hardy avowal of the unbelief they ascribed to the author. In the graces which the profligate has by right of his birth and education, and which are necessary to explain the success of his vicious enterprises, they saw only an attempt to make him a hero. In the remonstrances and arguments addressed to him by Sganarelle they saw only a desire to bring religion into contempt. In the closing scenes, notwithstanding the beauty of the part of the Statue, especially where, Juan having ordered his valet to precede it with a torch, it says, "No need of light for one whom Heaven guides"—in these

scenes they saw only an unavoidable adherence to the legend.

Denunciation of Molière.

Briefly, the drift of the play was ingeniously misunderstood, and what might have been intended as a satire against infidelity was taken in precisely the opposite sense. Molière, among other concessions to this stupidity, omitted the scene with the mendicant, which, it would seem, had given particular offense; but nothing short of the suppression of the play altogether would have satisfied his censors. Indeed, the clamor against him increased with each successive representation. Finally, after fifteen performances, *Don Juan* suddenly disappeared from the bills. Not that it had failed to catch the public fancy, for, during its run, the average of the receipts was unusually high. It seems to have been set aside at the instance of the court—a conclusion which is strengthened by the fact that the manuscript was not given to the printers. But, if Louis XIV again yielded to the outcry against his favorite player, he pointedly showed that he did not participate in it. He bestowed upon the Troupe de Monsieur the higher rank of Comédiens du Roi, with a pension of 7,000 francs. He also wished Molière to be titular chief of the company, but to this the dramatist would not assent. "Sire," he said, "I prefer to remain the friend of my comrades." The answer was sufficiently terse, and entirely characteristic of the man. Here we have, in these few words, the main secret of Molière's popularity among the members of the com-

pany; for he was never a self-seeking man, as must be evident to those who have thus far followed his career.

L'Amour Médecin.

The next new play in which the Comédiens du Roi appeared was an original piece, conceived and written by Molière himself. Down to this time, it should be understood, the medical faculty at Paris had seemed to exist for no other purpose than to impoverish and degrade the power of healing. Ignoring discoveries of the highest importance in anatomy and physiology, such as that of the circulation of the blood, the doctors, one and all, took their stand upon the *Aphorisms* of Hippocrates, or rather upon a narrow and unintelligent interpretation of that work, and clung with heroic tenacity to a host of exploded errors. In this they only kept an oath which the Collège had required them to take, namely, to shun anything like an innovation upon the laws laid down by the Father of Medicine. Each of them followed a particular mode of treatment, whatever the nature of the ailment might be. They used drugs without knowing precisely what the effect would be, and were not above the suspicion of taking bribes to kill where they were engaged to cure. In their consultations they invariably expressed themselves in Latin, and on returning to their mother tongue would all but bury their meaning under a mass of pedantic and technical jargon. Arrayed in the quaintest of costumes, with high conical hat, abnormally long peruke and a cloak of antique pattern, they made their way on mules through the tortuous yet pic-

turesque streets of the old quarter of the city, nothing doubting that the singularity of their appearance would inspire the vulgar with awe, while really objects of ridicule to the crowd and of terror to those who stood in need of their assistance.

Invented and prepared at only five days' notice, *L'Amour Médecin* was performed at Versailles in the middle of September, and a week later at the Palais Royal. Nothing could be simpler than the story here worked out. It turns merely on a stratagem employed by an ardent lover in the guise of a doctor to win the heroine from her father. But this little episode served as a foundation for one of the most exquisite and cutting satires Molière had yet contrived. A father, Sganarelle, impersonated by the author, calls in four doctors to cure his daughter of a strange melancholia which oppresses her. Each of these sages was made up to resemble one of the court physicians, and was introduced under a name designed to render the likeness more perfect. The incidents which follow are irresistible. The happy indifference to the fate of their patient with which the doctors proceed to discuss matters in general, instead of her mysterious ailment; the blank refusal of one to believe that a coachman has died in six days from a malady which Hippocrates had said could end in only fourteen to twenty-one; the elaborate ceremony they observe in expressing to Sganarelle an opinion on a point they have not considered, the babel of sound they produce by speaking all at once, the energy with which two of them insist on the application of a particular remedy, each assuring the bewildered father by turns that his daughter

will infallibly die if the treatment prescribed by the other is adopted—all this is treated with matchless skill.

Much of the force of the satire lies in the character of the soubrette, who in her lively manner condoles with the doctors on the wrong done to them when a man runs an antagonist through the body instead of allowing them to prescribe for him, and who declares that a man should be said to die, not of a fever, but of four doctors and two apothecaries. "Man's greatest weakness," says one of the faculty, "is love of life, which we turn to our own profit by our pompous mummery. Let us work in concert in treating our patients, so that, while getting the credit of the cures we effect, we may be able to blame nature for the failures of our art." Altogether, the piece gave rise to a world of merriment, both at court and in town. Everybody, Guy Patin tells us, went to the theatre to "laugh at the court doctors." The indignation of the faculty at this "outrage upon science" was, of course, very marked, but they had at least some comfort in the fact that the dramatist had selected the most prosperous members of the profession as the chief objects of his attack.

Alexandre.

When the manager of the Théâtre du Palais Royal received Racine's tragedy, *Alexandre le Grand*, opinion was much divided as to its merits. St. Evremand waxed eloquent in its praise. "No longer," he said, "does the decadence of Corneille fill me with alarm as to the immediate future of tragedy." On the other hand, Corneille himself, to whom the manuscript was

submitted, thought that M. Racine did not unite with his rare gifts as a poet a turn for the drama. In this he was deceived; but it is also true that if Racine had written nothing after *Alexandre* we should be constrained to adopt the same opinion. Notwithstanding the vigor with which the conqueror is occasionally brought before us, the general effect of the play is inferior to that of *La Thébaïde*, and the prominence given to the character of Porus argues an imperfect sense of dramatic proportion. Moreover, the author was still under the influence of the author of *Cinna*, though in some of the scenes we meet with gleams of tenderness all but new to the stage. Finally, however, *Alexandre*, with a few alterations suggested by Boileau, was played at the Palais Royal. Statements to the contrary notwithstanding, the piece met with good success. Molière had some superb scenery painted for it, and the acting was meritorious enough to elicit special praise.

Racine's Ingratitude to Molière.

Nevertheless, Racine was not satisfied with what had been done for him. He made no secret of his belief that the tragedy had not created the effect of which it was susceptible. The sycophants who hover about a rising man soon found a means of consoling him. Had *Alexandre* been played by the Troupe, always superior to the Comédiens du Roi in tragedy, the result, they maintained, would have been very different. Racine eagerly caught at the suggestion contained in this remark. He secretly sent a copy of the play to Floridor,

at the same time extracting a promise from Mdlle. Duparc, in whose talents he had a lively faith, that she would transfer her services from her old manager to his rivals. Hastily, but efficiently rehearsed, *Alexandre* was brought out at the Bourgogne on the occasion of its sixth performance at the Palais Royal, and the novel incident of a play being represented in two theatres at the same time naturally gave rise to some remark in Paris. It need hardly be said that the unavoidable comparison between the two troupes was to the disadvantage of Molière's, as the cast at the other playhouse included Floridor, Montfleuri and Mdlle. Desœillets. Molière was, of course, profoundly hurt by what had occurred. He had behaved with the greatest kindness to Racine, receiving him constantly as a guest, lending him much-needed money, keeping *La Thébaïde* on the bills at a loss to himself rather than allow it to be supposed that the piece had not had a fairly long run, and producing *Alexandre* with a splendor which the chances of its success by no means justified. In return for these and other favors, the young poet had publicly affronted the troupe, had exposed it to damaging comparisons, and had robbed it of an actress whose place could not easily be supplied. It was in no half-hearted manner that Molière resented the black ingratitude with which he had been treated. He never spoke to Racine again.

Agésilas and Antiochus.

Molière had now finished another comedy that was destined to become famous; but the death of Anne of

Austria, in whom he found an excellent friend, induced him to shelve it for a longer period than even etiquette required. Meanwhile, the players of the Bourgogne ventured to try the effect of two novelties—*Agésilas*, by Pierre Corneille, and *Antiochus*, a tragi-comedy, by his brother. Yet another proof of the decadence of the author of the *Cid* was found in the former piece. Even Fontenelle has little to urge in its favor. "It must be admitted" he says, "that *Agésilas* is by M. Corneille, seeing that his name is on the title-page, and that a scene in it between the hero and Lysandre could not easily have been written by any other hand." But, unfortunately for Corneille, now a sexagenarian, one fine scene will no more make an acting play than one swallow will make a summer. The tragedy was quickly withdrawn.

Le Misanthrope.

Molière's new comedy, *Le Misanthrope*, a striking picture of contemporary Parisian life, but pregnant with universal truth, was at length produced, and for many reasons must have taken the audience by surprise. The misanthrope, Alceste, impersonated by the author himself, was a character wholly new to the stage, and, unlike the central figure in other plays from the same pen, is intended to enjoy at least our respect, and even a certain measure of sympathy. He is no vulgar hater of mankind, no churlish or brutal cynic. High and noble in nature, he is alienated from the world by its want of heart, its insincerities, its more or less veiled falsehood, its hypocrisies of complaisance, its thousand

petty foibles. He regards it as nothing less than a crime that men should exchange civilities simply as a matter of form, should breathe a syllable against those whom they call their friends, or should gloss over their opinion of execrable verses when the author asks for it. His practice is at least equal to his theory; contempt for the harmless hypocrisies of every-day life, however, does not prevent him from becoming the slave of a woman in whom they are fully represented, the sprightly, accomplished, heartless coquette Célimène. He is conscious of his folly even as he gives way to it the most, and it is upon the conflict in his case between head and heart, terminating in the predominance of the former, that the interest of the play chiefly depends.

As a critic well observes, "The skill with which Célimène alternately plays with his patience, evades his reproaches, preserves her own independence while lessening his, elicits fresh proofs of his affection while only affording such glimpses of her own as shall serve to keep him from breaking his chains, and eventually making him more angrily in love than ever, is a triumph of delineation such as has rarely, if ever, been equalled." The figure of Alceste gains much by contrast with that of Philinte, the personification of worldly wisdom. The latter genially yields to the habits and customs of society, not because he wholly approves them, but on the principle that it is wise to make the best of circumstances, to take the world very much as one finds it. In this character the moral of the play may be discerned. Molière enforces the necessity of social toleration, though in doing so he casts no ridicule upon

Alceste, whose misanthropy is simply the outcome of virtue in excess. Excellent, also, of their kind are the gentle Eliante, the poetaster Oronte, and the prude Arsinöe. From a strictly dramatic point of view *Le Misanthrope* is not without defects, but it occupies a place by the side of *Don Juan* and *Tartuffe* in right of its beauty of style, its felicitous delineations, and its refined pungency as a satire against more than one fashionable false pretence. Its purely literary merit was so high that Boileau hailed it as his friend's masterpiece; but Molière was not of the same opinion.

Le Médecin Malgré Lui.

The Misanthrope did not need the aid of a good afterpiece, but when the great comedy was played for the twelfth time, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* was added to the bill. In this piece, which is erroneously supposed to have gained a hearing for its predecessor, Molière utilized fragments of his *Fagotier* and *Médecin Volant*, thus provoking a general laugh at the expense of the medical fraternity. Martine, the wife of an intelligent woodcutter, Sganarelle—personated by Molière—meets two men in search of a doctor for Lucinde, who, in order to get rid of a lover favored by her father, the stupid Geronte, but not by herself, has feigned dumbness. In revenge for a little corporal chastisement to which she has been subjected by her husband, Martine at once recommends him to their notice. He is, she says, a skilful doctor, but will not reveal the nature of his calling unless cudgelled into doing so. Her hint is acted upon;

and Sganarelle, informed of the reason of the assault made upon him, avows himself what they suppose him to be. He is then carried off in triumph to Geronte's house. It must be admitted that he plays his part very well. He takes kindly to the conical hat and long gown peculiar to the faculty. He rakes up a large variety of medical phrases. He adorns his discourse with a sufficient quantity of incoherent Latin to impress those about him with a conviction that he is a very learned man. Nay, it is a question with him whether he shall not remain a doctor all his life. "It is the best trade out," he tells us; "payment comes whether we kill or cure. No responsibility rests upon us; we may hack about as we please the stuff given us to work upon. If a patient dies, it is his own fault, never ours. Lastly, dead men, of all people the most discreet, tell no tales of the doctor who has sent them to their long account." His self-possession, too, seldom deserts him. Geronte having gently reminded him that, contrary to what he had said, the heart was on the left and the liver on the right side of the body, "Yes," is the reply, "that was so formerly; but nous avons changé tout cela"—this being the original of that popular phrase—"and we now adopt an entirely new method."

Attila.

Soon after Molière returned to Paris, the great Corneille, estranged for some unknown reason from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, brought him an *Attila,* which he bought for two thousand livres, and produced at the Palais Royal. However weak the tragedy may be in

other respects, the portraiture of the king of the Huns is not without breadth and force, and the character appears to have been impersonated with remarkable spirit. It was fairly successful and became one of the stock plays of the company, though Molière himself, as became a manager, was not blind to its numerous faults in versification. "Corneille," he said, "has a familiar who from time to time puts noble lines into his head, but immediately afterward leaves him to work by himself; he then fares very badly, and the aforesaid familiar waxes merry."

A severe illness proved grave enough to keep Molière off the stage for several months. Never very strong, he was now in a rapid consumption, and it was only by restricting himself to a milk diet that he could hope to retard the progress of the disease. The doctors could do little or nothing for him—a fact which, compared with their extravagant pretensions, may well have prompted him to follow up the attack begun in *L'Amour Médecin*. Nevertheless, he seems to have received visits from at least one member of the faculty, M. de Marvilian, for whom he conceived a high esteem, and for whose son he procured from the king a canonry in the Chapel Royal at Vincennes. "But how comes it that you have a doctor?" exclaimed Louis XIV. "How do you get on together?" "Sire," replied the dramatist, "we agree well enough, though only to differ. He writes prescriptions for me. I take no heed of them, and my health improves." Having regained strength as the summer approached, he now set his mind on the production of *Tartuffe*, and notwithstanding strenuous

opposition, it was produced a few weeks later under the title of *L'Imposteur*, this concession being required by the king, before withdrawing his prohibition. It was also required that the hypocrite should appear, not in sombre and semi-clerical costume, as before, but as a well-dressed man of the world.

L'Imposteur.

Never had a new piece brought together so large and excited an audience as was gathered in the Palais Royal on the opening night of *L'Imposteur*. Every nook and corner of the house was occupied, and each spectator seemed to have a personal interest in the result. The first two acts, which do little more than prepare us for the character of the impostor, were listened to with impatience, although strengthened by good acting. Then, dressed as the king had suggested, in the superbly laced coat and other bravery affected by the exquisites, Tartuffe, now called Panulphe, came on in the person of Ducroisy, who realized the author's intention with a thoroughness possible only to a fine artist. His costume was not in keeping with the character, but any sense of this inconsistency was merged in admiration of the depth and force of the conception, the dramatic power displayed in the delineation of the hypocrite, and the withering yet dignified satire which pervaded the whole. It was to no purpose that the hypocrites sought to raise a hostile demonstration against the piece. Every sign of hostility was promptly drowned in applause, and in the enthusiasm manifested on the fall of the curtain

Molière saw substantial compensation for the annoyance he had suffered in connection with what he regarded as his masterpiece.

Andromaque.

No ordinary surprise awaited the audience assembled at the Bourgogne when Racine's *Andromaque* made its appearance. In addition to being a tragedy of the order so long desired in vain, it was to them what the *Cid* had been to their progenitors in the days of Richelieu, the sudden revelation of a genius previously unsuspected. In framing his plot, Racine deviated very widely from the legend of the captivity of Hector's widow and son at the palace of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus. Three distinct and conflicting interests are brought into play. Andromache is loved by Pyrrhus, Pyrrhus by Hermione, and Hermione by Orestes. It is only by becoming the wife of her tyrant that Andromache can save her son from being delivered up to the vindictive Greeks; a deep-seated reverence for the memory of Hector struggles with the impulses of maternal affection, and at length, with a determination not to survive the marriage ceremony, she consents to the sacrifice required at her hands. Betrothed to Pyrrhus, whom she has left Greece to wed, Hermione, stung to madness by her humiliation, causes him to be assassinated on the altar steps just after the safety of Astyanax is assured, the chosen instrument of her vengeance being Orestes. But a fierce revulsion of feeling sweeps through her mind as the latter tells her of the crime she has urged

him to perpetrate. Far from giving him the expected reward of his devotion, she assails him with bitter invective, falls into an agony of remorse and destroys herself on the bier of her victim. Stunned by the discovery that he has lost his honor to no purpose, Orestes is hurried by Pylades and other friends beyond reach of the punishment with which he is threatened. In elaborating this impressive story, so different from the one related in the Greek play, Racine manifested the power required to do it justice. Blemishes in the work there unquestionably were; yet, viewed as a whole, it left no doubt that, in the field opened to him by Quinault and Molière, he would reign supreme unless another Euripides should arise.

In the third act Andromache pleads with Hermione for the life of her son; but Hermione answers her scornfully:

I understand your grief; but my father has spoken, and it is my stern duty to be silent. It is he who moves Pyrrhus to anger; but who can plead with Pyrrhus like yourself? Your eyes have long swayed him. Gain him to your side, and I will lend my voice.

As Hermione sweeps away, Pyrrhus and his counsellor Phœnix enter, and the unhappy mother hears the counsellor say:

Phœnix.—Let us give up Hector's son to the Greeks.

Andromache.—(Throwing herself at Pyrrhus' feet.) Ah, prince, pause! What will you do? If you give up the boy, give them his mother also. You who have sworn so much

love for me, O Heaven, can I not touch your pity? Am I condemned without hope?

Pyrrhus.—Phœnix will tell you; my word is pledged.

Andr.—You who would have braved for me so many perils!

Pyrr.—I was blind once; my eyes are opened now. I might then have granted you grace, but you did not even ask it. 'Tis now too late.

Andr.—Ah, prince! you heard the sighs which feared refusal. Forgive to fallen greatness this remnant of a pride that fears to show itself importunate. You know my wishes; and but for you Andromache would never have clasped the knees of a master. . . . See, then, the condition to which I am fallen. I have seen my father dead, and our walls thrown down; I have seen all my kindred perish. I have seen my husband dragged through the dust; his son reserved with me for chains. But what cannot a son do? I breathed, I hoped. I believed that our prison might become a refuge. Pardon, dear Hector, my credulity. I could not suspect thy enemy of a crime. In spite of himself, I thought him magnanimous.

Pyrrhus feels his heart melting, and sends away Phœnix so that he may speak more freely; and he conjures Andromache to think well of what she is about to do. She may, if she will, still save her son, but this is the last opportunity that will be given to her. As he goes on, his appeal to her becomes impassioned. "For the last time, save him, save yourself," he cries. "I know what oaths I must break for you, . . . but this offer is not to be disdained. You must reign or you must perish. I die if I lose you, but I die if I wait. Think of it." Thus Pyrrhus leaves her to make her choice.

The unhappy Andromache remains on the stage with Cephisa, her waiting-woman. Cephisa counsels her to accept Pyrrhus' offer, but she cannot resolve to marry her tyrant.

Andr.—Can I forget Hector unburied, dragged in dishonor round our walls? Can I forget his father thrown down at my feet, covering the altar with blood? Think, think, Cephisa, of that cruel night. Imagine Pyrrhus with fierce eyes entering by the light of the burning palace, making his way over my dead brethren!

Cephisa.—Enough. Let us then see your son die. All they want is that you—— You tremble, lady!

Andr.—Ah, with what memories you overwhelm my soul! What, Cephisa! must I see the death of my son, of my only joy, the image of Hector? Alas, I remember well the day when his brave heart led him forth to seek Achilles or death! He asked for his son and took him in his arms. "Dear wife," he said, drying my tears, "I know not what fate is reserved for me; I leave thee my son as a pledge of my love; if he loves me, let him find me in thee."

The fourth act opens with Andromache. She has made her choice. She will marry Pyrrhus, and thus engage him to protect her boy; and when she has left him at the altar, she will destroy herself. She takes Cephisa into her confidence, and instructs her how to teach her infant after she is gone.

Andr.—Make my son know the heroes of his race. As much as you may, lead him in their steps. Tell him by what great deeds they have been distinguished, what they did rather than what they were. Speak to him daily of the virtues of his father, and sometimes also tell him of his mother. But let him not think, Cephisa, of avenging us. We leave him a master whom he must consider. Let him have of his ancestors a sober recollection. He is of the blood of Hector, he is all that remains of him; and for that remnant I myself in one day have sacrificed blood and life, my hatred and my love.

Our attention is now recalled to Hermione, who receives with a terrible calm of passion which her attendant

cannot understand, the news of this renewed alteration in Pyrrhus. She will say nothing to Cleone, but sends for Orestes, whom she interrupts in his eager delight at the summons.

Herm.—Prince, I would know if you love me?

Orestes.—If I love you? O Heaven! My oaths, my perjuries, my flight, my return to you, my respect, my reproaches, my despair, my eyes drowned in tears—what witnesses will you believe if you believe not these?

Herm.—Avenge me; I believe everything.

Orest.—Be it so. Let us see once more Greece on flame. Let us take, you the place of Helen, I of Agamemnon, making famous my arm and your name. Awake once more in the land the miseries of Troy, and let us be famed like our fathers. Let us go. I am ready.

Herm.—No, prince, remain. I would not carry such insults so far. What! to crown the insolence of my enemies, shall I await elsewhere a tardy revenge? shall I trust to the fate of battles which perhaps in the end may not avenge me? I will have all Epirus weep my departure. But if you avenge me, it must be in an hour. Your delays are to me as refusals. Hasten to the temple. There you must sacrifice——

Orest.—Whom?

Herm.—Pyrrhus.

Orest.—Pyrrhus, lady!

Herm.—Ah! your hate wavers. Fly, and fear not that I will call you back.

Orestes is glad of an opportunity to avenge himself on Pyrrhus, but would prefer to take his vengeance openly. "Let us be his enemies, not his assassins," he says. He fears to sully his own name and the fair name of Greece by assassinating the king of Epirus. But Hermione is very imperative that Pyrrhus should die at once. She

feels that though he has cruelly wronged her, her old passion for him may return unless he is quickly punished. Unless he dies to-day she may forgive him, and love him again to-morrow. Orestes consents at last with reluctance and dread of the revolution that must follow, but still asks for delay. He will do it at night, not now. But Hermione is not to be put off.

Herm.—To-day he weds Andromache. Already in the temple the throne is raised, and my shame complete. Come back covered with the blood of the traitor. Go! and thus make sure of my heart.

Orest.—But, lady, think——

Herm.—Oh, it is too much, prince! Go vaunt your constancy to other ears than mine, and leave me to my revenge. I will go alone into the temple when the marriage rites are prepared, and where you dare not go to win me. There I shall find means to approach my enemy. I will pierce the heart which I could not touch; and my bloody hands, turned on myself, will unite us in spite of him. Thankless as he is, it will be sweeter to die with him than live with you.

Orest.—No; I will take this fatal pleasure from you, lady. He shall die only by the hand of Orestes. Your enemies shall be sacrificed by me, and you shall then reward my care, if it so pleases you.

Herm.—Go! leave to me the guidance of your fate, and let your ships be ready for our flight.

In the last act Orestes announces the death of Pyrrhus, but not by his hand:

Orest.—Lady, it is done! You are obeyed. Pyrrhus at the altar-steps has breathed forth his false life.

Herm.—He is dead!

Orestes then tells her the story. He went into the temple, and there saw Pyrrhus standing at the altar with

Andromache at his side. Pyrrhus recognized him, but only to show greater boldness. The presence of the Greeks, whose ambassador he had defied, made his marriage more splendid. He took his diadem and placed it on the head of Andromache. "I give you," he said, "my faith and my crown. Andromache, reign over Epirus and me. I swear to your son a father's care. I call the gods to witness it, I swear it to his mother. His enemies shall be my enemies, and I acknowledge him as king of the Trojans." To these words the Greeks answered only with a cry of rage. They flung themselves upon Pyrrhus. Orestes saw him fall, and hurried forth to save the princess and convey her to the ships.

Woman-like, Hermione's hate for Pyrrhus now turns to wrath and scorn for Orestes.

Herm.—What have they done?

Orest.—Pardon their impatience. They have, I know, forestalled your revenge. You would that my hand had struck the first blow, that he should have known that he died for your cause. But it was my zeal that was their example; for you I led them to the temple. Yours is the honor of a deed which their arms have only executed. You alone inspired the blow——

Herm.—Silence, traitor! This vile deed is thine alone. Go vaunt your fury among the Greeks. Go! I disown it and you. Savage! what have you done? with what fury have you cut the thread of a beautiful life? Speak! Who made thee the arbiter of his fate? Why have you killed him?—by what right? What has he done to thee?

Orest.—Gods above! What? Have not you yourself—you, here, a moment since, ordained his death?

Hermione replies to Orestes' exclamation:

Herm.—Ah, who would believe an outraged lover? You should have read my spirit better. Saw you not through all my rage that my heart gave the lie to my lips? Even if I said it, should you have consented? You should have made me repeat it a hundred times. You should have returned to consult me before giving the blow. You should have left to myself the care of my revenge. Adieu! you may depart. I remain in Epirus. I give up Greece, Sparta, my country, my family. It is enough for me, traitor, that they have produced a monster like you.

Orestes is left bewildered and overwhelmed by these invectives. He has made himself an assassin, a regicide, a sacrilegious murderer, to please her; and now she turns upon him. But he has little time to bewail himself; for Pylades and his retainers rush in to force him to flee.

Andromache is queen; the people are ready to obey her, and she has vowed revenge upon the foes of Pyrrhus. But Orestes, true to his love, will not forsake Hermione, until he is told that she is dead. On her way to the temple she met the bier of Pyrrhus, and, bidding the bearers halt, stooped over the body, then turned her head toward heaven and stabbed herself.

The play ends with a wild outburst of passion and despair from Orestes. He is the sport of the gods. In his anguish the day seems to darken round him, and he sees a vision of his rival and his love:

Orest.—What? Pyrrhus! I meet thee once again! Pierced by so many blows, how hast thou escaped? Hold! here is my blow, which I have saved for thee. But what do I see? Hermione before my eyes clasps him in her arms. She snatches him from the threatened blow. Ye gods, what looks she casts upon me! What demons, what serpents she brings after her!

VI.

Golden Age of French Drama.

The period now under consideration has justly been termed the golden age of the French drama, for now appeared on the stage simultaneously the choicest works of the three greatest masters of dramatic art. Pierre Corneille, in his *Cid*, *Horace*, *Polyeucte* and *Cinna*, had given to France a national tragedy such as no other people possessed. Molière had done even more in comedy, for in this he was the most versatile genius the world has ever known. The tragic art of Racine supplemented rather than surpassed that of his great contemporary. His works reflect the serene and settled formality of an age when the sun of monarchy shone with an effulgence in which the life of the entire nation was centred. Then there are Thomas Corneille, Quinault, and others who would themselves have been classed in the very first rank had they not been overshadowed by the great classic triad.

The form of French tragedy thus established, like all else belonging to the age of the grand monarque, proclaimed itself as the settled model of the time, and as such was accepted by a submissive world. Proud of

its self-imposed fetters, tragedy denied the liberty of which it had deprived itself to the art of which it claimed to furnish the highest examples. But while calling itself classical it had not caught the essential spirit of the Greeks. The elevation of tone which marks the serious drama in the age of Louis XIV was a real elevation, but it does not lose itself in a sphere peopled by the myths of a national religion. Its themes and personages are entirely conventional, and its speeches and passions are cadenced by a modern measure. Orestes and Iphigenia do not bring with them the cries of the Erinnyes or the flame on the altar of Artemis; nor is there anything of the awe-inspiring grandeur with which Æschylus and Sophocles invest their heroes. In construction, the simplicity and regularity of the ancient models are stereotyped into a rigid etiquette by the exigencies of the court theatre, which is but an apartment of the palace; and the unities of time and place, with the Greeks mere rules of convenience, French tragedy imposes upon itself as a permanent yoke.

In 1668, Molière contrived a counterpoise to the exceptional popularity of of Racine's *Andromaque*. This was a free rendering of the *Amphitruo* of Plautus, which in more than one respect was greatly to his credit. He wrote it with a delicacy to which the nature of the subject was hardly favorable. Even Schlegel is constrained to confess that the coarseness of the old legend is refined as much as it possibly could be without injury to its spirit and boldness. In both incident and character, too, the French *Amphitryon* is superior to the

Latin original. While Jupiter is appearing to Alcmène in the form of Amphitryon, her husband, Mercure, pays court to Cléanthis, the wife of Sosie, Amphitryon's serving-man. Between Alcmène and Cléanthis a most dramatic contrast is displayed, the former being a pattern of tenderness and the latter so inveterate a scold, "though all in affection," that Mercure is induced to keep out of her way as much as possible. If Armande looked and spoke like Alcmène, whose part she took, it must have been a remarkable triumph of art over nature; but Sosie, with his fine humor and quaint philosophy, was one of the best of Molière's characters, and was doubtless represented to perfection. Boileau declared that he liked the ancient *Amphitryon* better than the other—an opinion which other critics, after a close comparison of the two plays, have not endorsed.

L'Avare.

In his next work, *L'Avare*, a five-act comedy in prose, we have the most typical product of Molière's many-sided genius. In each of his other plays he had given special prominence to one of his qualities as a dramatist; here they are all laid under contribution in about equal degrees. Much of the power revealed in *Don Juan* is displayed side by side with the finest humor, the tenderest sentiment, the most exquisite ridicule, the most searching satire. Indebted to the *Aulularia* for the general conception of the piece, Molière deviated from it in several important respects, and in the result left the comedy of Plautus far behind. Harpagon is preferable to

Euclio, not only as being free from anything like extravagance, but in depth and force of characterization. He is generally regarded as the most vivid embodiment yet in existence of the sordid passion which absorbs his mind. Many of his actions and sayings have passed into proverbs. He is the bourgeois miser who steals the oats from his horses; who is distracted by the suspicion that his children intend to rob him; who, from a constitutional objection to the word "give," will only say "I lend you" good day; who will sacrifice his daughter to a stupid old man rather than give her a modest dowry; who, on finding it necessary to entertain ten persons at supper, provides for eight only; who counsels his gambling son to lend out at good interest the money he wins; whose love for a young woman yields in the end to avarice; and who, unlike Euclio, is anxious to increase as well as hoard what he possesses. Every scene in which he appears serves to throw fresh light upon his character. Yet, repulsive as is the vice he represents, his presence throws no gloom over the play, partly because he is held up to derision as well as hatred, and partly because all his surroundings are treated in the spirit of the liveliest comedy.

For the groundwork of the piece, which also differs from that of the *Aulularia*, we have a double love intrigue, the personages being numerous enough to bring on the stage the entire company of the Palais Royal. Many incidents and scraps of dialogue are borrowed from Plautus and from modern Italian farces. Molière himself played Harpagon, though the increasing weakness of his chest; now shown in a chronic, hacking cough,

rendered him unable, at least without a dangerous effort, to portray the anguish of the miser on discovering the loss of his treasure. Béjart, who was cast for La Flèche, the valet, was also laboring under an infirmity conspicuous enough to become a part of the play. Not long before, in the Place Royal, he had surprised two of his friends doing their best to run each other through the body. He impulsively rushed between them, and was so badly wounded in the foot as to make him lame for the rest of his life.

Prince Condé.

In nowise discouraged by the comparative failure of *L'Avare*, Molière continued to exert himself in behalf of his beloved *Tartuffe*. Even if that immortal comedy should attract only seekers of curiosity—and he now had some reason to fear as much—its production would be of great advantage to the troupe, and of still greater advantage to himself. Louis XIV had not yet re-examined the manuscript, as he had promised, and Molière, too prudent to trouble him with another letter respecting it, decided to recall the matter to his mind by causing the play to be privately represented before an august assemblage. It should be understood that for some time past he had a close friend in the great Condé, whose eagle-like face, still unseamed by years, was often to be seen at the hospitable table in the Rue Richelieu or at Auteuil. "Molière," he said one day, "I am sure that my visits interfere with your work. I shall not come to see you again unless you expressly invite me.

But I hope that you will come to see me whenever your leisure permits it. You have only to send in your name by a valet-de-chambre; your visits can never be ill-timed." Nor did this prove an empty compliment. The prince invariably received the dramatist as one of his most honored guests. "Molière," he used to say, "is a man of genius, of solid judgment, of wide erudition. I never tire of his society."

In the middle of September, before *L'Avare* had completed its first short run, the Comédiens du Roi set forth for the ancient and picturesque château of Chantilly, which now belonged to the prince, and there played *Tartuffe* before an audience comprising many personages of a rank exalted enough to give special interest to the performance. Molière, it is probable, had induced his host to bring them together, so as to remind the king of his promise, and he gained his point; for his majesty soon afterward turned his attention to the piece.

Les Plaideurs.

When Molière returned to Paris he found some of his laurels menaced. Racine, not content with being regarded as the rival of Corneille, suddenly made an excursion into the domain of light satirical comedy by writing *Les Plaideurs*, a clever adaptation of the *Wasps* of Aristophanes. Early in the year Racine had been dispossessed by legal process of his benefice at Epinay for refusing to take the clerical habit, and was looking about him for some other source of income. Brought into contact with advocates who often exposed them-

selves to ridicule by their pedantry and prolixity, he resolved to exercise his wit at the expense of law-practice in general.

Farcical in incident but deficient in humor, *Les Plaideurs* may yet be allowed to take rank as an excellent comedy, thanks to wit, refined sarcasm, clever sketches of character, and a by no means inconsiderable amount of the Attic salt of the original. In it we find personages soon to become proverbial—the judge who is so enraptured with his calling that he sleeps in his robe and cap, the advocate who opens his address with the creation of the world, and the countess who seems to have her being only in the stifling atmosphere of the law courts. Most of the piece was written in a tavern, where the wits of Paris, including Boileau, Lafontaine, Chapelle and Furetière, frequently met to kill time. The scene between Chicaneau and the countess was derived from an incident which occurred in the house of Boileau's elder brother, the enthusiastic litigant of real life being the comtesse de Crisse, recently made notorious by the fact that the Parlement, in sheer self-defense, had rendered her unable to commence any action without a certificate from two of its own counsellors.

Tartuffe in Public.

The hour to which Molière had so long looked forward was at hand. Early in 1669, to the consternation and dismay of his devout subjects as a body, the king set aside the decree against the representation of *Tartuffe*, and, as though to mark his sense of the bitter

attacks made upon the dramatist, permitted the hypocrite to appear in his original name and garb. The announcement on the bills acted upon Paris like an electric shock; on the day selected for the reproduction the approaches to the theatre were densely crowded, and a few minutes after the opening of the doors every corner of the house was occupied. If Molière had any doubts as to the success of *Tartuffe* as a work of dramatic art they were speedily set at rest. By a large majority of the audience the comedy was listened to with mingled admiration and resentment—admiration of the genius displayed in the conception and elaboration of the picture, resentment at the calumnies to which the author had been exposed. Except in a few unimportant details, the play had undergone no alteration since its previous performance, and was obviously calculated to promote rather than injuriously affect the interests of religion.

One of the most amusing scenes is founded on an incident which occurred during the campaign of 1662, when Louis XIV invited Péréfixe, the bishop of Rhodez, to join him at supper. The prelate declined, for it was a fast day, "and he must make but a light repast." As soon as he had gone, a courtier described to the king the nature of this light repast, which consisted of several exquisite dishes. "Le pauvre homme," the king frequently exclaimed, as the items were named, varying the tone of his voice at each utterance. Molière availed himself of this to illustrate the blind infatuation of Orgon for the hypocrite. Returning after two days' absence, the bourgeois asks whether all has gone

well during that time. Dorine says that her mistress has been feverish. "And Tartuffe?" "He supped by himself in her presence, very devoutly eating two partridges and half a leg of mutton hashed." "Poor soul!" Dorine goes on to say that her mistress had consented to be bled. "And Tartuffe?" "He took courage like a man; and, fortifying his soul against all evils, to make up for the blood which madame had lost, he drank at déjeuner four good beakers of wine." "Poor soul!" the old dupe again murmurs. Excellently managed, this diverting episode appears like a ray of light upon the surface of the gloomy yet fascinating play. The dénoûement is somewhat forced and unnatural, but it provided the grateful poet with the means of paying an honorable tribute to the king, who in the last act uses his absolute power to crush the hypocrite in the hour of his triumph.

It was not a mere gratification of curiosity that *Tartuffe* achieved. No such tumult of applause as that which broke forth on the fall of the curtain had yet been heard on the French stage. In this demonstration, together with the congratulations showered upon him by friends behind the scenes, Molière was rewarded for the trouble and annoyance he had suffered on account of what he deemed his masterpiece; but he seems to have thought the advantage had been gained at too high a price. "Tartuffe," he was told, "is really of service to virtue." "That is true," he replied, "but experience has taught me that it is a dangerous thing to espouse her interests, and at times I reproach myself for having done so." The play was repeated for forty-four nights

in succession—at that time an almost unprecedented run—and the company, finding its exchequer full, insisted, with one voice, that the sum due to Molière as the author should be doubled whenever the piece was played.

Britannicus.

The attention of the theatre-going public was now turned to the Bourgogne, where, in the middle of December, another tragedy by Racine, named *Britannicus*, was brought out before a deeply-interested audience, the great Corneille occupying one of the boxes. Friends and foes were alike anxious to see how far the young dramatist would justify the reputation he had so suddenly achieved. Foreseeing that much would be expected of him, Racine had taken more than usual pains with his work, and the result seemed likely to realize all his hopes. Based upon Tacitus, but often original in character and incident, *Britannicus* formed a splendid representation of Nero and his court, though it may not be strictly true, as was said, that "all the energy of the Roman annalist is here expressed in verse worthy of Virgil." Nero himself is portrayed with a vigor which the author often missed in his treatment of male personages, and anything more winsome and pathetic than Mdlle. d'Ennebaut as Junie it would not be easy to conceive. Every other important character in the play, too, is finely drawn and contrasted. No lack of sensibility or dramatic skill was betrayed, and the diction was by far the most refined yet heard in a French tragedy.

VII.

The Last Days of Molière.

Molière, whose malady continued to make rapid progress, had now arrived at an important stage in his career. He saw little or no encouragement to pursue the new path into which he had struck six years previously. *Don Juan* had no sooner appeared than it was rigorously suppressed, and *Tartuffe* had very nearly shared the same fate. Moreover, each of these comedies had exposed him to the most virulent abuse, though any pain he may have suffered on this account was lessened by a conviction that a later age would do justice to his motives in composing them. Experience had taught him that between a sportive satire on folly and an elaborate onslaught on deeply-rooted vice there was an important difference. The former had the countenance of the king; the latter aroused so much ire that his majesty was compelled to stop its publication. Under these circumstances, it would seem, Molière, however tempted he may have been always to display his powers at their best, seems to have asked himself whether, for the sake of the little commonwealth of players at the Palais Royal, whose sole dependence was in him, he ought not to discontinue the composition of

pieces which his royal master might be prevailed upon to prohibit as soon as they appeared. Had he not done enough already to secure an enviable place among the writers of the Golden age? He had still many chances of exercising his wit, his humor, his genial yet searching satire. The doctors were still ambling on their mules through the streets of Paris in all the pride of solemn quackery; every wealthy plebeian was aping the tone and bearing of his betters; the fine ladies of Paris, who had incited the religious world to regard him as a wretch deserving the stake, had redelivered themselves into the hands of the satirist by substituting for préciosité an affected predilection for all kinds of learning. Whatever his reasons may have been, Molière henceforward confined himself to his lighter vein, and the fascinating voice which had spoken to the world in *Don Juan* and *Tartuffe* was no more to be heard.

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.

In his next work, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, the dramatist once more ridicules the craving among the wealthy bourgeoisie to gain admission into fashionable society. Monsieur Jourdain, a retired draper, resolves to make up for the deficiencies of his education, if he can be said to have received any, and to pose as a man of quality. He surrounds himself with professors of dancing, music, fencing and philosophy. He arrays himself in clothes of the most resplendent hues. He is delighted to hear that his father, far from having been a draper by trade, as the vulgar supposed, was really a

gentleman who chanced to have a good knowledge of woolen stuffs and broadcloths, and who, being of an obliging disposition, chose such articles in the country, had them brought to Paris, and gave them to his friends for money. Moreover, when Cléonte, an excellent youth, aspires to the hand of M. Jourdain's daughter Lucile, her father rejects him on the ground that he is not of noble birth. But the bourgeois gentilhomme is not a person to be angry with. He is an incarnation of the parvenu spirit in its most genial aspect; he has an honest belief in the virtues of rank and education; he is always in good humor, always satisfied with himself, always of childlike simplicity. Neither the sharp remonstrances of his wife, a truly sensible woman, nor the raillery of Nicole, the waiting-maid, has any effect upon the beaming complacency with which he struts about in his finery, makes progress in courtly accomplishments, and learns that what he has been talking all his life is prose.

His credulity is the pivot upon which the plot chiefly turns. Disguised as a son of the Grand Seigneur, Cléonte appears before the delighted bourgeois, avows a passion for his daughter, and, after investing him in due form with the dignity of mamamouchi, gains his consent to the marriage. Neatly dovetailed into the story is the figure of an impecunious and rascally nobleman, Dorante, who enriches himself at the expense of M. Jourdain by promising to advance his interests at court. The circumstances surrounding the investiture, although not without a counterpart in real life, must be deemed a little too farcical, but have not prevented *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* from taking rank as a masterpiece of com-

edy—a distinction it enjoys by reason of its dialogue, its characters, its unfailing gayety and humor.

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme was played first at Chambord and then at the Palais Royal. Before the court, it should be noted, each act was accompanied by a ballet, the most important being that in which the Turks accompanying Cléonte to M. Jourdain's house took part, and in which Lulli, the composer of all the music, appeared under the name of Chiacaron as the Grand Mufti. Molière's independence was brought to a severe test on this occasion. The king never relaxed a muscle during the whole of the performance, and on meeting the dramatist at supper-time did not utter a word of congratulation. The courtiers, however disposed they may have been to enjoy the ridicule heaped upon citizen pretenders to quality, promptly affected to look down upon the piece and its author, especially as they had not forgotten their old grudge against him. Many were of opinion that his genius was on the wane; others declared that he had committed an unpardonable offense in exhibiting a count as a chevalier d'industrie.

But a peculiar surprise was in store for these courtly censors. It came upon them after a second performance of the play. "M. Molière," the king then said to the author, "my reason for not speaking to you the other day of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was that I feared I had been blinded by the completeness of the acting to any faults it might have. I now see that it is excellent; nothing you have written has diverted me more. Henceforward, too, Mdlle. Beauval, hitherto on trial, will be a member of your company." In an instant the attitude

of the courtiers underwent a change. Many were of opinion that his genius improved with age; others began to admire the adroitness of Dorante as a chevalier d'industrie. The dramatist kept to his room to escape a chorus of congratulations from men whom he heartily despised. The story is doubtless true; for the servility of the courtiers in the age of Louis XIV is almost incredible, while the monarch delighted in quietly ridiculing the homage he demanded. For the rest, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* was received with acclamations at the Palais Royal, not only on account of its intrinsic value, but because, as Grimarest puts it, each wealthy citizen saw in the chief personage a vivid portrait of another.

Molière's *Psyche* and *Les Fourberies de Scapin* need not here be described in detail. The former was written by order of Louis XIV to illustrate the legend of Psyche in the form of a ballet. It was more remarkable for its mounting than for its literary excellence, though Molière had the coöperation of Quinault and Corneille.

Psyche was to be connected with an incident of deep personal interest to Molière. Nearly five years had elapsed since Mdlle. Debrie went to Auteuil, and it was hoped that, under her influence, Molière had burnt the idol he had so long adored. But this he had not done. His passion for the coquette who bore his name was proof against even the remembrance of the dishonor she had brought upon him. Her ascendency over him seems to have increased each time that he met her in his house at the Rue de Richelieu, at rehearsal or on the stage. It is probable that he never appeared with her in scenes more or less analogous to their own situation—and there

were many such scenes in his plays—without an intensity of feeling which, if it made his voice husky, must have added to the force of his acting. Had his wisdom been equal to his generosity, he would have sent her away; as it was, moth-like, he continued to hover about the flame. In *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, not content with limning her portrait with the lightest and tenderest hand in the character of Lucile, he identified himself to some extent with her lover, who, though persuaded that she has betrayed him, is unable to shake off his chains—nay, discovers new charms in her acknowledged defects of mind and person. But it was not until *Psyche* appeared that the poet ceased to be master of himself. By the time the curtain fell, he was as fervently in love with Armande as when he led her away from the altar of a little Parisian church, or when, the scales having dropped from his eyes,, he unbosomed himself to Chapelle in the garden at Auteuil. In anguish hardly to be described, yet unselfishly remembering that mental disquietude would hasten his end, Mdlle. Debrie earnestly urged his wife, if only for the sake of her own interests, to seek a reconciliation with and respect him. Armande went to him in a penitential attitude; and Molière, in the excess of his new-found happiness, had no heart to speak or think of the past.

Les Fourberies de Scapin.

In anticipation of the production of *Psyche* at the Palais Royal, Molière, now in the highest spirits, threw off *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. His need of a novelty at

this time must have been very pressing, for in none of his plays did he rely so little on his own powers of invention as in this. The plot, which turns on the devices employed by an astute valet to wring money from a close-fisted father for a prodigal son, was suggested by the *Phormio* of Terence, and was developed with the aid of details borrowed from Rotrou's *Sœur*, Tabarin's farce of *Francisquine*, and other pieces. Certain it is that he improved upon what he did borrow, besides animating the action and the dialogue with a verve quite his own.

Les Femmes Savantes.

Molière next made an assault upon a craze which may be described as a survival in a new form of the affectation he had laughed away in *Les Précieuses*. Nearly every lady of fashion now deemed it necessary to be learned in philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, Greek and the niceties of French grammar. The stars of de Scudéri and Calprenède paled before those of Plato, Descartes, Nicole and Vaugelas. If poetry and romance continued to be read, it was simply as a relief from the strain of sublime and far-reaching speculation. In a word, Parisian society found itself overrun with blue-stockings of the most formidable kind, and it became a question whether the scientific jargon in vogue was not worse than the inflated rhetoric of former years. In this folly, the fashionable set at the Hôtel de Rambouillet were encouraged by several of the men who hovered about them, and to one especially attention is now directed. The abbé Cotin,

in his own belief, was a very remarkable man. He seriously regarded himself as the father of French enigma, as the first of sonnet-writers, and as a more powerful preacher than Bossuet. In one of Boileau's earlier satires a painful immortality was conferred upon him, and in his consequent exasperation he wrote a pamphlet against his critic, at the same time heaping gratuitous insults upon Molière. By doing so, perhaps, he strengthened his footing at the Rambouillet, where the author of *Les Précieuses Ridicules* was not loved. Molière abstained from noticing these attacks; but it presently occurred to him—and Boileau did not attempt to change his mind on the subject—that the abbé Cotin might be employed to good purpose as a character in a play designed to throw ridicule upon préciosité in its latest aspect. Such a play, entitled *Les Femmes Savantes*, was now in rehearsal at the Palais Royal.

Boileau may well have felt astonished at the dramatic skill displayed in the new comedy. Its materials were of the simplest character, but in point of interest, as of fineness of ridicule and general workmanship, it was not unworthy of a place by the side of the *Misanthrope*. The scene is laid in the house of a sensible citizen, Chrysale, the learned ladies being his wife, Philaminte, the most imperious of her sex; Belise, his sister, who fondly believes that she has the heart of every man who has seen her, and Armande, his daughter, a serious bel-esprit. It must be admitted that this well-constructed trio are consistent with themselves. Martime, their maid-servant, is dismissed because her gram-

mar is not impervious to criticism, and it is to be feared that a lackey with but hazy notions as to the centre of gravity will share her fate. The character designed to represent Cotin was a fashionable pretender to poetry, Trissotin, who pays court to Philaminte's daughter, Henriette, a clever girl, in the hope of enriching himself. His stage name was originally Tricotin, but as this indicated the original a little too plainly, it was changed to that which he now bore, and which, as being equivalent to treble-dyed fool, made matters a little worse. A learned man, he is received with rapture by the learned ladies, who are nearly ready to expire with delight when he reads them some wretched verses of his own—so wretched, in fact, that the audience must have screamed with laughter before he had done. Molière had taken these verses word for word from a forgotten volume of galantes by the abbé himself. Next comes Vadius, an unscrupulous plagiarist from the Greeks and Romans. Trissotin introduces him as a fine Grecian. "Greek!" exclaims Philaminte, "sister, he knows Greek!" "Niece," says Belise, "do you hear?—Greek!" "Greek!" says Armande! "ah, how delightful!" The two men beslaver each other with praise, but not for long. Vadius accidentally wounds Trissotin's self-esteem; a row between them follows, and the Grecian, stung to fury by the taunts of the other, bounces out of the room. In the end, of course, Trissotin and the savantes are discomfited; Henriette, who pleasantly satirizes her relatives' mania, pairing off with a more sensible lover. Martime, we are told, was played to the life by a girl in Molière's domestic service,

and this was very probably the case, for he was ever on the watch for new talent.

The *Femmes Savantes* is said to have met at the outset with a frigid reception, but this statement is not to be reconciled with the effect which the comedy unquestionably created. Every bas-bleu in Paris felt the ridicule strike home. "Is it to be tolerated," Madame de Rambouillet indignantly asked Ménage, one of the most sensible of the précieuses, "that this miscreant should be permitted to torment us in this way?" Ménage had the honesty to praise the satire, though one of those believed to be assailed. "Madame," he replied, "I have seen the piece, which is singularly fine. As for myself, Molière has disavowed any intention to ridicule me." And he continued to flutter about the salons. Not so the abbé Cotin. He became the laughing-stock of Paris; he could not venture to show his face either in society or in the pulpit, and his friends deserted him in a body. Eventually, overwhelmed by the storm, he abruptly left Paris, never to be heard of again. He died soon afterward, and it is probable that the incident would never have been known if it had not caused a vacancy at the Academy. Molière was too large-hearted to view without pain the consequences of his satire. Had he foreseen them, no doubt, he would have held his hand; but he had nothing with which to reproach himself. *Les Femmes Savantes* did not overstep the bounds of legitimate satire, though the author may have drawn nearer to them than was usual with him. For the rest, the comedy was repeatedly performed before the court at Saint Cloud, there to be

treated by the king with as much favor as *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.*

Académie d'Opéra.

In the early days of *Les Femmes Savantes* the Spanish players received their dismissal, but a more formidable rival to the French troupes than these foreigners had ever proved was now to arise. *La Toison d'Or* and *Andromède*, with the fanciful pieces which Molière composed at the instance of the king, had created a taste for plays with music, besides showing that the French language was not so unsuited to lyrical forms as had been alleged. Mindful of all this, the abbé Perrin persevered with the innovation he had introduced in *La Pastorale* and *Ariadne*, and in the summer of 1669 the king formally gave him leave to establish an "Académie d'opéra en vers François." By this time, in order to gratify the growing taste for musical plays, the marquis de Sourdéac had built a theatre in a tennis court in the Rue Mazarine, near the Luxembourg. Perrin obtained possession of it at a fixed rental, and here his *Pomone*, set to music by Cambert, was performed by a troupe of singers from the churches of Languedoc. It soon appeared that he was on the high road to fortune, for playgoers went in hundreds to listen to the first French opera. But the cup was rudely dashed from the abbé's lips. The marquis, impoverished by his outlays on the theatre, seized the receipts as security for his rent, and, being remonstrated with by Perrin in terms more vehement than polite, angrily resolved, in defiance of the privilege, to assume the direction of so profitable an

enterprise himself. The next opera given in the Rue Mazarine, *Les Peines et Plaisirs de l'Amour*, written by Gilbert, was produced under the auspices of this unscrupulous nobleman. Lulli, coveting the mine of wealth here discovered, profited by the quarrel to suggest that the interests of French opera would be safer in his hands than those of Perrin, to whom he was willing to give a small sum. He gained his point; the king gave him the exclusive right of representing musical pieces, forbade any one to enter the theatre without paying, and declared that to sing at the Académie was in no sense derogatory to one's dignity. Thus the founders of the French opera found themselves put out in the cold in the very hour of their triumph. Cambert, migrating in disgust to England, became director of music to Charles II, and Perrin, remaining in Paris, sought consolation in working upon elegies and sonnets. Lulli devoted himself to composing music, which was deservedly forgotten, while the libretti which Quinault prepared took a permanent place in operatic literature.

Mithridate.

Racine's *Mithridate*, brought out at the Bourgogne, was an evident attempt to wrest dramatic supremacy from the venerable Corneille. Mithridate, with his strength of mind and unfaltering courage, his pride and resolution, his hatred and dissimulation, was one of the figures to which only the Corneille of thirty years before seemed capable of doing justice on the stage. But the comparison did not prove so direct as Racine originally

intended. The tastes of the play-going public, to say nothing of the necessity of creating for Champmêlé a character of tender and commanding interest, required him to throw an atmosphere of love and jealousy over the play. Accordingly, he represents Mithridate as consumed by a passion for Monime, the captive princess, and as having rivals in the persons of his sons Xipharès and Pharnace. Monime is an example of womanhood in its purest and most gracious aspect; and, if tradition may be trusted, nothing could have been more expressive and beautiful than Champmêlé's rendition of the part. The political interest of the tragedy was not very strong, but the scene where Mithridate enlarges upon his project of bringing Rome to his feet has a grandeur which Corneille only had surpassed, and which excused the partisans of the younger dramatist for believing that he had vanquished Corneille at his best.

Racine now became a member of the Academy, thereby attaining a distinction more and more coveted among Frenchmen as time went on. In the first instance it was proposed that the vacant chair should be assigned to the author of *Tartuffe*, though not unless he previously renounced his profession as an actor. Boileau was chosen to submit this proposal to his old friend, and no one seemed to doubt that it would be accepted. Molière could not be insensible to such a mark of esteem, and his chest complaint, aggravated by the fact that since his reconciliation with Armande he had returned to the use of meat and wine, furnished him with a sufficient reason for avoiding in future the exertion incident to acting. Yet, to the profound astonishment of the Acad-

emy, and indeed of Paris, he at once declined the offer. His sense of honor, he said, left him no alternative in the matter. "Honor!" Boileau sarcastically exclaimed; "prithee tell me what honor there is in disfiguring your face with moustachios, dressing yourself as a buffoon and being thrashed on the public stage." "More than a hundred persons," replied Molière, unmoved by the taunt, "are benefited by my appearing in a piece; and I will not insult a profession which I love, and to which I am so materially indebted, by purchasing any personal advantages at the cost of throwing a slur upon it." The Academy, as may be supposed, did not waive the condition under which their offer to Molière was made, and Racine was elected in his stead. In later years the members did something to atone for the short-sightedness of their predecessors. They reverently placed in their hall a bust of the great dramatist-actor. "Nothing," they wrote underneath it, "was wanting to his glory, but he was wanting to ours."

Le Malade Imaginaire.

Molière's illness daily assumed a graver aspect, but as the shadow of death deepened around him, he wrote and played in one of the most vivacious of his comedies. This was the *Malade Imaginaire*, composed for the diversion of the king on his return from the first campaign in Holland. In the main it was another broadside against the doctors, if not against the art of healing itself, ridiculing the fear of death and the love of life. M. Argan's hypochondriacism is nothing less than a

mental disease. He takes as much medicine as would suffice for a regiment, and his doctors, needless to say, industriously flatter his self-deception. By a fine stroke of humor, too, his sick fancies are blended with a cautious frugality. His fond delight in the flowery language in which the bills against him are drawn up does not prevent him from cutting them down. "What particularly pleases me in my apothecary," he says, "is that his charges are so prettily worded. 'Pour refraichir les entrailles de Monsieur, thirty sous.' Yes, M. Fleurent; but you must not flay your patients. If you are not more reasonable, I cannot afford to be ill." In the same spirit he resolves to marry his daughter Angelique to a pusillanimous medical student, one Thomas Diafoirus, and in the end becomes a doctor himself. By donning the garb of the faculty, he is told, he will cover all deficiencies, as under such a garb folly becomes wisdom and gibberish learning. In a pleasant interlude, supplied with music by Charpentier, the hypochondriac goes through a caricature in macaronic Latin—an idea suggested by Boileau over a supper at Madame de la Sablière's—of the ceremony actually observed on the admission of new doctors to the college. In attacking medical science itself, Molière was not well advised; but it would be too much to expect a man in the last stages of an incurable malady to have much faith in the art of healing. Fortunately, Argan was not a character which subjected him to a heavy strain, and the author acted it with the most whimsical effect. Paris again roared at the expense of the doctors, and by all others *Le Malade Imaginaire* was extolled as one of the merriest of

Molière's pieces, nor has their verdict been reversed by that of posterity.

Death of Molière.

It was the last effort of the dying dramatist. Early in the day fixed for the fourth performance, he was so weak that his wife and Baron united in urging him not to play. But, as usual, he thought of others before himself. "How," he asked, "can I refuse to go on when so many persons' bread depends upon it? I should reproach myself for the distress I might cause them, having sufficient strength to prevent it." Nor was he to be diverted from his resolution. Soon after four o'clock, by which time an audience well disposed to appreciate the new satire on the physicians had filled the theatre to repletion, he again appeared in the high-backed arm-chair of the malade imaginaire. His acting showed no falling off in subtlety or humor, but to those who anxiously watched him from the side of the stage it was painfully evident that the comparatively slight exertion it entailed told heavily upon him. How curious it must have seemed to some of them that a man in such a state should be employed in giving expression to the fancies of a mere hypochondriac!

In the closing interlude, where Argan takes his oath as a new doctor, swearing to adhere to the remedies approved by antiquity, be they right or wrong, and to ignore modern discovery, there occurred something which had not been set down for him in the play. The last "juro" had hardly passed his lips when he was

seized with a convulsion. He sought to disguise it by forcing a laugh, but its ring was so hard and harsh that many among that hilarious assembly felt a shiver pass through their frames. The curtain was lowered, and the stricken dramatist, now fainting and speechless, was tenderly conveyed to his home. Soon he was able to speak. "My course," he said, "is run. My wife promised me a drugged pillow to make me sleep; let me have it. The only remedies I shrink from are those which have to be swallowed; they are enough to rob me of the little life that remains." While being put to bed he was seized with a fit of coughing; blood streamed from his mouth, and he faintly asked that the consolations of religion might not be denied him. Baron and Armande immediately sought out two ecclesiastics of the parish of St. Eustache, who, however, told them that the author of *Tartuffe* was not a fit person to receive the last consolations. The next priest applied to had a better sense of his duties, but he arrived only in time to see Molière die in the arms of two Sisters of Mercy, to whom he had long given shelter during their Lenten visits to Paris, and who, by a suggestive coincidence, had chanced to knock at his door as the ecclesiastics of St. Eustache were refusing to soothe his last moments.

Character and Writings of Molière.

The death of Molière cast a gloom over Paris which was not soon dispelled; for everyone knew this swarthy, thick-featured, neatly-dressed man, so grave in mien,

so refined and unassuming in manner, so self-respecting in his intercourse with rank, so observant of all that passed under his eyes, so full of the milk of human kindness, so ready to acknowledge the merits of others and undervalue his own, so frank and cordial with his chosen friends, so whimsical in the contrast presented between his sedate demeanor and the gleams of humor which shot from beneath his heavy black brows. No one had created so ineffaceable an impression upon the hearts and minds of those who knew him, whether at court, in salons, at the theatre, or in his own home. Louis XIV was as much grieved as the hardness of his nature would permit; Corneille may well have felt that his old age had been deprived of another great solace; the kindly Lafontaine wrote tender verse in praise of the dead; Chapelle took his loss so much to heart that for some hours his life was in danger; Boileau burst into tears, albeit not used to the melting mood. Condé, receiving from some poetaster an ill-turned epitaph on the author of *Tartuffe*, said: "Would that it had been his fate to write yours." As for the players of the Palais Royal, it was no ordinary blow that they suffered by their loss. Irritated as at times they may have been by the impossibility of pleasing him at rehearsal—for his judgment and taste were too fine to be easily satisfied—they held his name in grateful veneration, not only because his genius brought them prosperity, but as a result of the brotherly feeling he had manifested toward them. It was not forgotten that he had given them more than a due share of the profits of their commonwealth, had elected to remain one of

themselves instead of becoming their titular chief, had often been content to play comparatively trifling parts, and in their interest had worked when prudence counselled him to rest. To no one, however, was his death a matter of more poignant affliction than an aged domestic, named Laforet, probably the Lisette who had smiled upon his juvenile essays in the art of mimicry. Finding that what pleased her invariably diverted the public, he read his lighter pieces to her before they were produced, and if any passage he intended to be comic did not make her laugh he took care to improve it forthwith.

By the Parisians in general—by the lively world he had portrayed and amused—the tidings of his death were received with a feeling of profound regret. Every play-goer must have been consciously his debtor, and all were aware that in him a fine original genius had passed away. The accuracy of that estimate is not open to question. As a rule, it is true, he was content, as Shakespeare had been, to work with second-hand materials, though the pieces in which he relied almost exclusively upon his own powers of invention, such as *Tartuffe* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, are not inferior in dramatic interest to any of their companions. In his search for subjects he seems to have traversed the whole field of ancient, mediæval and latter-day literature. His library, in addition to the Greek and Roman classics, included nearly two hundred and fifty volumes of French, Italian and Spanish plays—and there is no doubt that he had waded through them all for suggestions as to plot and detail. But he was no

servile plagiarist. His works bear the same relation to their sources as *Macbeth* bears to the weird legend on which it was based. He transmuted comparatively base metal into fine gold. Everything he borrowed was recast in a mould peculiar to himself, was to assume a form and color which he alone could impart.

The influence which Molière exercised over the public mind was all on the side of good. Judged by the standard of his own age, his plays contain nothing which he could have wished to omit. In his liveliest mood he is at pains to convey a beneficial lesson, sometimes, it is true, at the risk of appearing a little too didactic. He broke his lance full in the visor of evils and follies rampant under his eyes—religious hypocrisy, avarice, préciosité, medical quackery, insincerity of speech, the pride of the nobles, the affectation of learning, the pretensions of the wealthy bourgeoisie, and the narrow system upon which women in his time were educated—and he succeeded in modifying all. "Name the writer who has conferred the greatest lustre on my time," Louis XIV once said to Boileau. "Sire, c'est Molière," was the unhesitating reply. In these simple words the verdict of posterity was anticipated.

THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS

L'ÉCOLE DES MARIS.

COMÉDIE.

BY MOLIERE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SGANARELLE, } *Brothers.*
ARISTE, }

VALÈRE, Lover to Isabella.

ERGASTE, Servant to Valère.

A MAGISTRATE.

A NOTARY.

ISABELLA, } *Sisters.*
LÉONOR, }

LISETTE, Maid to Isabella.

SCENE—A PUBLIC PLACE IN PARIS.

The School for Husbands.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Sganarelle, Ariste.

Sganarelle.—Pray, brother, let us talk less, and let each of us live as he likes. Though you have the advantage of me in years, and are old enough to be wise, yet I tell you that I mean to receive none of your reproofs; that my fancy is the only counsellor I shall follow, and that I am quite satisfied with my way of living.

Ariste.—But every one condemns it.

Sgan.—Yes, fools like yourself, brother.

Ar.—Thank you very much. It is a pleasant compliment.

Sgan.—I should like to know, since one ought to hear everything, what these fine critics blame in me.

Ar.—That surly and austere temper which shuns all the charms of society, gives a whimsical appearance to all your actions, and makes everything peculiar in you, even your dress.

Sgan.—I ought then to make myself a slave in fashion, and not to put on clothes for my own sake? Would you not, my dear elder brother—for, Heaven be thanked, so you are, to tell you plainly, by a matter of twenty years; and that is not worth the trouble of mentioning—would you not, I say, by your precious nonsense, persuade me to adopt the fashions of those young sparks of yours? Oblige me to wear those little hats which provide ventilation for their weak brains, and that flaxen hair, the vast curls whereof conceal the form of the human face; those little doublets but just below the arms,

and those big collars falling down to the navel; those sleeves which one sees at table trying all the sauces, and those petticoats called breeches; those tiny shoes, covered with ribbons, which make you look like feather-legged pigeons; and those large rolls wherein the legs are put every morning, as it were into the stocks, and in which we see these gallants straddle about with their legs as wide apart, as if they were the beams of a mill? I should doubtless please you, bedizened in this way; I see that you wear the stupid gewgaws which it is the fashion to wear.

Ar.—We should always agree with the majority, and never cause ourselves to be stared at. Extremes shock, and a wise man should do with his clothes as with his speech; avoid too much affectation, and without being in too great a hurry, follow whatever change custom introduces. I do not think that we should act like those people who always exaggerate the fashion, and who are annoyed that another should go further than themselves in the extremes which they affect; but I maintain that it is wrong, for whatever reasons, obstinately to eschew what every one observes; that it would be better to be counted among the fools than to be the only wise person, in opposition to every one else.

Sgan.—That smacks of the old man who, in order to impose upon the world, covers his gray hairs with a black wig.

Ar.—It is strange that you should be so careful always to fling my age in my face, and that I should continually find you blaming my dress as well as my cheerfulness. One would imagine that old age ought to think of nothing but death, since it is condemned to give up all enjoyment; and that it is not attended by enough ugliness of its own, but must needs be slovenly and crabbed.

Sgan.—However that may be, I am resolved to stick to my way of dress. In spite of the fashion, I like my cap so that my head may be comfortably sheltered beneath it; a good long doublet buttoned close, as it should be, which may keep the stomach warm, and promote a healthy digestion; a pair of breeches made exactly to fit my thighs; shoes, like those of our wise ancestors, in which my feet may not be tortured: and he who does not like the look of me may shut his eyes.

SCENE II.

Léonor, Isabella, Lisette; Ariste and Sganarelle, conversing in an under-tone, unperceived.

Léonor.—(To Isabella.) I take it all on myself, in case you are scolded.

Lisette.—(To Isabella.) Always in one room, seeing no one?

Isabella.—Such is his humor.

Léo.—I pity you, sister.

Lis.—(To Léonor.) It is well for you, madam, that his brother is of quite another disposition; fate was very kind in making you fall into the hands of a rational person.

Isa.—It is a wonder that he did not lock me up to-day, or take me with him.

Lis.—I declare I would send him to the devil, with his Spanish ruff, and——

Sganarelle.—(Against whom Lisette stumbles.) Where are you going, if I may ask?

Léo.—We really do not know; I was urging my sister to talk a walk, and enjoy this pleasant and fine weather; but——

Sgan.—(To Léonor.) As for you, you may go wherever you please. (To Lisette.) You can run off; there are two of you together. (To Isabella.) But as for you, I forbid you —excuse me—to go out.

Ariste.—Oh, brother! let them go and amuse themselves.

Sgan.—I am your servant, brother.

Ar.—Youth will——

Sgan.—Youth is foolish, and old age too, sometimes.

Ar.—Do you think there is any harm in her being with Léonor?

Sgan.—Not so; but with me I think she is still better.

Ar.—But——

Sgan.—But her conduct must be guided by me; in short, I know the interest I ought to take in it.

Ar.—Have I less in her sister's?

Sgan.—By Heaven! each one argues and does as he likes. They are without relatives, and their father, our friend, entrusted them to us in his last hour, charging us both either to marry them, or, if we declined, to dispose of them hereafter. He gave us, in writing, the full authority of a father and a husband over them, from their infancy. You undertook to bring up that one; I charged myself with the care of this one. You govern yours at your pleasure. Leave me, I pray, to manage the other as I think best.

Ar.—It seems to me——

Sgan.—It seems to me, and I say it openly, that is the right way to speak on such a subject. You let your ward go about gaily and stylishly; I am content. You let her have footmen and a maid; I agree. You let her gad about, love idleness, be freely courted by dandies; I am quite satisfied. But I intend that mine shall live according to my fancy, and not according to her own; that she shall be dressed in honest serge, and wear only black on holidays; that, shut up in the house, prudent in bearing, she shall apply herself entirely to domestic concerns, mend my linen in her leisure hours, or else knit stockings for amusement; that she shall close her ears to the talk of young sparks, and never go out without some one to watch her. In short, flesh is weak; I know what stories are going about. I have no mind to wear horns, if I can help it; and as her lot requires her to marry me, I mean to be as certain of her as I am of myself.

Isa.—I believe you have no grounds for——

Sgan.—Hold your tongue, I shall teach you to go out without us!

Léo.—What, sir——

Sgan.—Good Heavens, madam! without wasting any more words, I am not speaking to you, for you are too clever.

Léo.—Do you regret to see Isabella with us?

Sgan.—Yes, since I must speak plainly; you spoil her for me. Your visits here only displease me, and you will oblige me by honoring us no more.

Léo.—Do you wish that I shall likewise speak my thoughts plainly to you? I know not how she regards all this; but

I know what effect mistrust would have on me. Though we are of the same father and mother, she is not much of my sister if your daily conduct produces any love in her.

Lis.—Indeed, all these precautions are disgraceful. Are we in Turkey, that women must be shut up? There, they say, they are kept like slaves; this is why the Turks are accursed by God. Our honor, sir, is very weak indeed, if it must be perpetually watched. Do you think, after all, that these precautions are any bar to our designs? that when we take anything into our heads, the cleverest man would not be but a donkey to us? All that vigilance of yours is but a fool's notion; the best way of all, I assure you, is to trust us. He who torments us puts himself in extreme peril, for our honor must ever be its own protector. To take so much trouble in preventing us is almost to give us a desire to sin. If I were suspected by my husband, I should have a very good mind to justify his fears.

Sgan.—(To Ariste.) This, my fine teacher, is your training. And you endure it without being troubled?

Ar.—Brother, her words should only make you smile. There is some reason in what she says. Their sex loves to enjoy a little freedom; they are but ill-checked by so much austerity. Suspicious precautions, bolts and bars, make neither wives nor maids virtuous. It is honor which must hold them to their duty, not the severity which we display toward them. To tell you candidly, a woman who is discreet by compulsion only is not often to be met with. We pretend in vain to govern all her actions; I find that it is the heart we must win. For my part, whatever care might be taken, I would scarcely trust my honor in the hands of one who, in the desires which might assail her, required nothing but an opportunity of falling.

Sgan.—That is all nonsense.

Ar.—Have it so; but still I maintain that we should instruct youth pleasantly, chide their faults with great tenderness, and not make them afraid of the name of virtue. Léonor's education has been based on these maxims. I have not made crimes of the smallest acts of liberty, I have always assented to her youthful wishes, and, thank Heaven, I

never repented of it. I have allowed her to see good company, to go to amusements, balls, plays. These are things which, for my part, I think are calculated to form the minds of the young; the world is a school which, in my opinion, teaches them better how to live than any book. Does she like to spend money on clothes, linen, ribbons—what then? I endeavor to gratify her wishes; these are pleasures which, when we are well-off, we may permit to the girls of our family. Her father's command requires her to marry me; but it is not my intention to tyrannize over her. I am quite aware that our years hardly suit, and I leave her complete liberty of choice. If a safe income of four thousand crowns a year, great affection and consideration for her, may, in her opinion, counterbalance in marriage the inequality of our age, she may take me for her husband; if not, she may choose elsewhere. If she can be happier without me, I do not object; I prefer to see her with another husband rather than that her hand should be given to me against her will.

Sgan.—Oh, how sweet he is! All sugar and honey!

Ar.—At all events, that is my disposition; and I thank Heaven for it. I would never lay down these strict rules which make children wish their parents dead.

Sgan.—But the liberty acquired in youth is not so easily withdrawn later on; all those feelings will please you but little when you have to change her mode of life.

Ar.—And why change it?

Sgan.—Why?

Ar.—Yes.

Sgan.—I do not know.

Ar.—Is there anything in it that offends honor?

Sgan.—Why, if you marry her, she may demand the same freedom which she enjoyed as a girl?

Ar.—Why not?

Sgan.—And you so far agree with her as to let her have patches and ribbons?

Ar.—Doubtless.

Sgan.—To let her gad about madly at every ball and public assembly?

Ar.—Yes, certainly.

Sgan.—And the beaux will visit at your house?

Ar.—What then?

Sgan.—Who will junket and give entertainments?

Ar.—With all my heart.

Sgan.—And your wife is to listen to their fine speeches?

Ar.—Exactly.

Sgan.—And you will look on at these gallant visitors with a show of indifference?

Ar.—Of course.

Sgan.—Go on, you old idiot. (To Isabella.) Get indoors, and hear no more of this shameful doctrine.

SCENE III.

Ariste, Sganarelle, Léonor, Lisette.

Ariste.—I mean to trust to the faithfulness of my wife, and intend always to live as I have lived.

Sganarelle.—How pleased I shall be to see him victimized!

Ar.—I cannot say what fate has in store for me; but as for you, I know that if you fail to be so, it is no fault of yours, for you are doing everything to bring it about.

Sgan.—Laugh on, giggler! Oh, what a joke it is to see a railer of nearly sixty!

Léonor.—I promise to preserve him against the fate you speak of, if he is to receive my vows at the altar. He may rest secure; but I can tell you I would pass my word for nothing if I were your wife.

Lisette.—We have a conscience for those who rely on us; but it is delightful, really, to cheat such folks as you.

Sgan.—Hush, you cursed ill-bred tongue!

Ar.—Brother, you drew these silly words on yourself. Good-bye. Alter your temper, and be warned that to shut up a wife is a bad plan. Your servant.

Sgan.—I am not yours.

SCENE IV.

Sganarelle, alone.

Oh, they are all well suited to one another! What an admirable family. A foolish old man with a worn-out body who plays the fop; a girl-mistress and a thorough coquette; impudent servants—no, wisdom itself could not succeed, but would exhaust sense and reason, trying to amend a household like this. By such associations, Isabella might lose those principles of honor which she learned amongst us; to prevent it, I shall presently send her back again to my cabbages and turkeys.

SCENE V.

Valère, Sganarelle, Ergaste.

Valère.—(Behind.) Ergaste, that is he, the Argus whom I hate, the stern guardian of her whom I adore.

Sganarelle.—(Thinking himself alone.) In short, is there not something wonderful in the corruption of manners nowa days?

Val.—I should like to address him, if I can get a chance and try to strike up an acquaintance with him.

Sgan.—(Thinking himself alone.) Instead of seeing that severity prevail which so admirably formed virtue in other days, uncontrolled and imperious youth hereabout assumes. —— (Valère bows to Sganarelle from a distance.)

Val.—He does not see that we bow to him.

Ergaste.—Perhaps his blind eye is on this side. Let us cross to the right.

Sgan.—I must go away from this place. Life in town only produces in me——

Val.—(Gradually approaching.) I must try to get an introduction.

Sgan.—(Hearing a noise.) Ha! I thought some one spoke. —— (Thinking himself alone.) In the country, thank Heaven, the fashionable follies do not offend my eyes.

Erg.—(To Valère.) Speak to him.

Sgan.—What is it?—— my ears tingle—— There, all the recreations of our girls are but—— (He perceives Valère bowing to him.) Do you bow to me?

Erg.—(To Valère.) Go up to him.

Sgan.—(Not attending to Valère.) Thither no coxcomb comes. (Valère again bows to him.) What the deuce!—— (He turns and sees Ergaste bowing on the other side.) Another? What a great many bows!

Val.—Sir, my accosting you disturbs you, I fear?

Sgan.—That may be.

Val.—But yet the honor of your acquaintance is so great a happiness, so exquisite a pleasure, that I had a great desire to pay my respects to you.

Sgan.—Well.

Val.—And to come and assure you, without any deceit, that I am wholly at your service.

Sgan.—I believe it.

Val.—I have the advantage of being one of your neighbors, for which I thank my lucky fate.

Sgan.—That is all right.

Val.—But, sir, do you know the news going the round at court, and thought to be reliable?

Sgan.—What does it matter to me?

Val.—True; but we may sometimes be anxious to hear it? Shall you go and see the magnificent preparations for the birth of our Dauphin, sir?

Sgan.—If I feel inclined.

Val.—Confess that Paris affords us a hundred delightful pleasures which are not to be found elsewhere. The provinces are a desert in comparison. How do you pass your time?

Sgan.—On my own business.

Val.—The mind demands relaxation, and occasionally gives way, by too close attention to serious occupations. What do you do in the evening before going to bed?

Sgan.—What I please.

Val.—Doubtless no one could speak better. The answer is just, and it seems to be common sense to resolve never to do what does not please us. If I did not think you were too much occupied, I would drop in on you sometimes after supper.

Sgan.—Your servant.

SCENE VI.

Valère, Ergaste.

Valère.—What do you think of that eccentric fool?

Ergaste.—His answers are abrupt and his reception is churlish.

Val.—Ah! I am in a rage.

Erg.—What for?

Val.—Why am I in a rage? To see her I love in the power of a savage, a watchful dragon, whose severity will not permit her to enjoy a single moment of liberty.

Erg.—That is just what is in your favor. Your love ought to expect a great deal from these circumstances. Know, for your encouragement, that a woman watched is half-won, and that the gloomy ill-temper of husbands and fathers has always promoted the affairs of the gallant. I intrigue very little; for that is not one of my accomplishments. I do not pretend to be a gallant; but I have served a score of such sportsmen, who often used to tell me that it was their greatest delight to meet with churlish husbands, who never come home without scolding—downright brutes, who, without rhyme or reason, criticise the conduct of their wives in everything, and, proudly assuming the authority of a husband, quarrel with them before the eyes of their admirers. "One knows," they would say, "how to take advantage of this. The lady's indignation at this kind of outrage, on the one hand, and the considerate compassion of the lover, on the other, afford an opportunity for pushing matters far enough." In a word, the surliness of Isabella's guardian is a circumstance sufficiently favorable for you.

Val.—But I could never find one moment to speak to her in the four months that I have ardently loved her.

Erg.—Love quickens people's wits, though it has little effect on yours. If I had been——

Val.—Why, what could you have done? For one never sees her without that brute; in the house there are neither maids nor men-servants whom I might influence to assist me by the alluring temptation of some reward.

Erg.—Then she does not yet know that you love her?

Val.—It is a point on which I am not informed. Wherever the churl took this fair one, she always saw me like a shadow behind her; my looks daily tried to explain to her the violence of my love. My eyes have spoken much; but who can tell whether, after all, their language could be understood?

Erg.—It is true that this language may sometimes prove obscure, if it have not writing or speech for its interpreter.

Val.—What am I to do to rid myself of this vast difficulty, and to learn whether the fair one has perceived that I love her? Tell me some means or other.

Erg.—That is what we have to discover. Let us go in for a while—the better to think over it.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Isabella, Sganarelle.

Sganarelle.—That will do; I know the house, and the person, simply from the description you have given me.

Isabella.—(Aside.) Heaven, be propitious, and favor today the artful contrivance of an innocent love!

Sgan.—Do you say they have told you that his name is Valère?

Isa.—Yes.

Sgan.—That will do; do not make yourself uneasy about it. Go inside, and leave me to act. I am going at once to talk to this young madcap.

Isa.—(As she goes in.) For a girl, I am planning a pretty bold scheme. But the unreasonable severity with which I am treated will be my excuse to every right mind.

SCENE II.

Sganarelle, alone.

(Knocks at the door of Valère's house). Let us lose no time; here it is. Who's there? Why, I am dreaming! Hulloa, I say! hulloa somebody! hulloa! I do not wonder, after this information, that he came up to me just now so meekly. But I must make haste, and teach this foolish aspirant——

SCENE III.

Valère, Sganarelle, Ergaste.

Sganarelle.—(To Ergaste, who has come out hastily.) A plague on the lubberly ox! Do you mean to knock me down —coming and sticking yourself in front of me like a post?

Valère.—Sir, I regret——

Sgan.—Ah! you are the man I want.

Val.—I, sir?

Sgan.—You. Your name is Valère, is it not?

Val.—Yes.

Sgan.—I am come to speak to you if you will allow me.

Val.—Can I have the happiness of rendering you any service?

Sgan.—No; but I propose to do you a good turn. That is what brings me to your house.

Val.—To my house, sir!

Sgan.—To your house. Need you be so much astonished?

Val.—I have good reason for it; I am delighted with the honor——

Sgan.—Do not mention the honor, I beseech you.

Val.—Will you not come in?

Sgan.—There is no need.

Val.—I pray you, enter.

Sgan.—No, I will go no further.

Val.—As long as you stay there I cannot listen to you.

Sgan.—I will not budge.

Val.—Well, I must yield. Quick, since this gentleman is resolved upon it, bring a chair.

Sgan.—I am going to talk standing.

Val.—As if I could permit such a thing!

Sgan.—What an intolerable delay!

Val.—Such incivility would be quite unpardonable.

Sgan.—Nothing can be so rude as not to listen to people who wish to speak to us.

Val.—I obey you, then.

Sgan.—You cannot do better. (They make many compliments about putting on their hats.) So much ceremony is hardly necessary. Will you listen to me?

Val.—Undoubtedly, and most willingly.

Sgan.—Tell me: do you know that I am guardian to a tolerably young and passably handsome girl who lives in this neighborhood, and whose name is Isabella?

Val.—Yes.

Sgan.—As you know it, I need not tell it to you. But do you know, likewise, that as I find her charming, I care for her otherwise than as a guardian, and that she is destined for the honor of being my wife?

Val.—No!

Sgan.—I tell it you, then; and also that it is as well that your passion, if you please, should leave her in peace.

Val.—Who?—I, sir?

Sgan.—Yes, you. Let us have no dissembling.

Val.—Who has told you that my heart is smitten by her?

Sgan.—Those who are worthy of belief.

Val.—Be more explicit.

Sgan.—She herself.

Val.—She!

Sgan.—She. Is not that enough? Like a virtuous young girl, who has loved me from childhood, she told me all just

now; moreover, she charged me to tell you, that, since she has everywhere been followed by you, her heart, which your pursuit greatly offends, has only too well understood the language of your eyes; that your secret desires are well known to her; and that to try more fully to explain a passion which is contrary to the affection she entertains for me, is to give yourself needless trouble.

Val.—She, you say, of her own accord, makes you——

Sgan.—Yes, makes me come to you and give you this frank and plain message; also, that, having observed the violent love wherewith your soul is smitten, she would earlier have let you know what she thinks about you if, perplexed as she was, she could have found any one to send this message by; but that at length she was painfully compelled to make use of me, in order to assure you, as I have told you, that her affection is denied to all save me; that you have been ogling her long enough; and that, if you have ever so little brains, you will carry your passion somewhere else. Farewell, till our next meeting. That is what I had to tell you.

Val.—(Aside.) Ergaste, what say you to such an adventure?

Sgan.—(Aside, retiring.) See how he is taken aback!

Ergaste.—(In a low tone to Valère.) For my part, I think that there is nothing in it to displease you; that a rather subtle mystery is concealed under it; in short, that this message is not sent by one who desires to see the love end which she inspires in you.

Sgan.—(Aside.) He takes it as he ought.

Val.—(In a low tone to Ergaste.) You think it a mystery——

Erg.—Yes—— But he is looking at us; let us get out of his sight

SCENE IV.

Sganarelle, alone.

How his face showed his confusion! Doubtless he did not expect this message. Let me call Isabella; she is show-

ing the fruits which education produces on the mind. Virtue is all she cares for; and her heart is so deeply steeped in it, that she is offended if a man merely looks at her.

SCENE V.

Isabella, Sganarelle.

Isabella.—(Aside, as she enters.) I fear that my lover, full of his passion, has not understood my message rightly! Since I am so strictly guarded, I must risk one which shall make my meaning clearer.

Sganarelle.—Here I am, returned again.

Isa.—Well?

Sgan.—Your words wrought their full purpose; I have done his business. He wanted to deny that his heart was touched; but when I told him I came from you, he stood immediately dumbfounded and confused; I do not believe he will come here any more.

Isa.—Ah, what do you tell me? I much fear the contrary, and that he will still give us more trouble.

Sgan.—And why do you fear this?

Isa.—You had hardly left the house when, going to the window to take a breath of air, I saw a young man at yonder turning, who first came, most unexpectedly, to wish me good morning, on the part of this impertinent man, and then threw right into my chamber a box, enclosing a letter, sealed like a love-letter. I meant at once to throw it after him; but he had already reached the end of the street. I feel very much annoyed at it.

Sgan.—Just see his trickery and rascality!

Isa.—It is my duty quickly to have this box and letter sent back to this detestable lover; for that purpose I need some one; for I dare not venture to ask yourself——

Sgan.—On the contrary, darling, it shows me all the more your love and faithfulness; my heart joyfully accepts this task. You oblige me in this more than I can tell you.

Isa.—Take it then.

Sgan.—Well, let us see what he has dared to say to you.

Isa.—Heavens! Take care not to open it!

Sgan.—Why so?

Isa.—Will you make him believe that it is I? A respectable girl ought always to refuse to read the letters a man sends her. The curiosity which she thus betrays shows a secret pleasure in listening to gallantries. I think it right that this letter should be peremptorily returned to Valère unopened, that he may the better learn this day the great contempt which my heart feels for him; so that his passion may from this time lose all hope, and never more attempt such a transgression.

Sgan.—Of a truth she is right in this! Well, your virtue charms me, as well as your discretion. I see that my lessons have borne fruit in your mind; you show yourself worthy of being my wife.

Isa.—Still I do not like to stand in the way of your wishes. The letter is in your hands, and you can open it.

Sgan.—No, far from it. Your reasons are too good; I go to acquit myself of the task you impose upon me; I have likewise to say a few words quite near, and will then return hither to set you at rest.

SCENE VI.

Sganarelle, alone.

How delighted I am to find her such a discreet girl! I have in my house a treasure of honor. To consider a loving look treason, to receive a love-letter as a supreme insult, and to have it carried back to the gallant by myself! I should like to know, seeing all this, if my brother's ward would have acted thus, on a similar occasion. Upon my word, girls are what you make them—— Hulloa! (Knocks at Valère's door.)

SCENE VII.

Sganarelle, Ergaste.

Ergaste.—Who is there?

Sganarelle.—Take this; and tell your master not to presume so far as to write letters again, and send them in gold boxes; say also that Isabella is mightily offended at it. See, it has not even been opened. He will perceive what regard she has for his passion, and what success he can expect in it.

SCENE VIII.

Valère, Ergaste.

Valère.—What has that surly brute just given you?

Ergaste.—This letter, sir, as well as this box, which he pretends that Isabella has received from you, and about which, he says, she is in a great rage. She returns it to you unopened. Read it quickly, and let us see if I am mistaken.

Val.—(Reads.) "This letter will no doubt surprise you; both the resolution to write to you and the means of conveying it to your hands may be thought very bold in me; but I am in such a condition, that I can no longer restrain myself. Well-founded repugnance to a marriage with which I am threatened in six days, makes me risk everything; and in the determination to free myself from it by whatever means, I thought I had rather choose you than despair. Yet do not think that you owe all to my evil fate; it is not the constraint in which I find myself that has given rise to the sentiments I entertain for you; but it hastens the avowal of them, and makes me transgress the decorum which the proprieties of my sex require. It depends on you alone to make me shortly your own; I wait only until you have declared your intentions to me before acquainting you with the resolution I have taken; but, above all, remember that time presses, and that two hearts, which love each other, ought to understand even the slightest hint."

Erg.—Well, sir, is not this contrivance original? For a young girl she is not so very ignorant. Would one have thought her capable of these love stratagems?

Val.—Ah, I consider her altogether adorable. This evidence of her wit and tenderness doubles my love for her, and strengthens the feelings with which her beauty inspires me——

Erg.—Here comes the dupe; think what you will say to him.

SCENE IX.

Sganarelle, Valère, Ergaste.

Sganarelle.—(Thinking himself alone.) Oh, thrice and four times blessed be the law which forbids extravagance in dress! No longer will the troubles of husbands be so great! women will now be checked in their demands. Oh, how delighted I am with the King for this proclamation! How I wish, for the peace of the same husbands, that he would forbid coquetry, as well as lace, and gold or silver embroidery. I have bought the law on purpose, so that Isabella may read it aloud; and, by and by, when she is at leisure, it shall be our entertainment after supper. (Perceiving Valère.) Well, Mr. Sandy-hair, would you like to send again love-letters in boxes of gold? You doubtless thought you had found some young flirt, eager for an intrigue, and melting before pretty speeches. You see how your presents are received! Believe me, you waste your powder and shot. Isabella is a discreet girl, she loves me and your love insults her. Aim at some one else, and be off!

Valère.—Yes, yes; your merits, to which every one yields, are too great an obstacle, sir. Though my passion be sincere, it is folly to contend with you for the love of Isabella.

Sgan.—It is really folly.

Val.—Be sure I should not have yielded to the fascination of her charms, could I have foreseen that this wretched heart would find a rival so formidable as yourself.

Sgan.—I believe it.

Val.—Now I know better than to hope; I yield to you, sir, and that too without a murmur.

Sgan.—You do well.

Val.—Reason will have it so; for you shine with so many virtues, that I should be wrong to regard with an angry eye the tender sentiments which Isabella entertains for you.

Sgan.—Of course.

Val.—Yes, yes, I yield to you; but at least I pray you—and it is the only favor, sir, begged by a wretched lover, of whose pangs this day you are the sole cause—I pray you, I say, to assure Isabella that, if my heart has been burning with love for her these three months, that passion is spotless, and has never fostered a thought at which her honor could be offended.

Sgan.—Ay.

Val.—That, relying solely on my heart's choice, my only design was to obtain her for my wife, if destiny had not opposed an obstacle to this pure flame in you, who captivated her heart.

Sgan.—Very good.

Val.—That, whatever happens, she must not think that her charms can ever be forgotten; that to whatever decrees of Heaven I must submit, my fate is to love her to my last breath; and that, if anything checks my pursuit, it is the just respect I have for your merits.

Sgan.—That is wisely spoken; I shall go at once to repeat these words, which will not be disagreeable to her. But, if you will listen to me, try to act so as to drive this passion from your mind. Farewell.

Ergaste.—(To Valère.) The excellent dupe!

SCENE X.

Sganarelle, alone.

I feel a great pity for this poor wretch, so full of affection. But it is unfortunate for him to have taken it into his head to try to storm a fortress which I have captured. (Sganarelle knocks at his door.)

SCENE XI.

Sganarelle, Isabella.

Sganarelle.—Never did lover display so much grief for a love-letter returned unopened! At last he loses all hope, and retires. But he earnestly entreated me to tell you, that, at

least, in loving you, he never fostered a thought at which your honor could be offended, and that, relying solely on his heart's choice, his only desire was to obtain you for a wife, if destiny had not opposed an obstacle to his pure flame, through me, who captivated your heart; that, whatever happens, you must not think that your charms can ever be forgotten by him; that, to whatever decrees of Heaven he must submit, his fate is to love you to his last breath; and that if anything checks his pursuit, it is the just respect he has for my merits. These are his very words; and, far from blaming him, I think him a gentleman, and I pity him for loving you.

Isabella.—(Aside.) His passion does not contradict my secret belief, and his looks have always assured me of its innocence.

Sgan.—What do you say?

Isa.—That it is hard that you should so greatly pity a man whom I hate like death; and that, if you loved me as much as you say, you would feel how he insults me by his addresses.

Sgan.—But he did not know your inclinations; and, from the uprightness of his intentions, his love does not deserve——

Isa.—Is it good intentions, I ask, to try and carry people off? Is it like a man of honor to form designs for marrying me by force, and taking me out of your hands? As if I were a girl to live after such a disgrace!

Sgan.—How?

Isa.—Yes, yes, I have been informed that this base lover speaks of carrying me off by force; for my part, I cannot tell by what secret means he has learned so early that you intend to marry me in eight days at the latest, since it was only yesterday you told me so. But they say that he intends to be beforehand with you, and not let me unite my lot to yours.

Sgan.—That is a bad case.

Isa.—Oh, pardon me! He is eminently a gentleman, who only feels toward me——

Sgan.—He is wrong; and this is past joking.

Isa.—Yes, your good nature encourages his folly. If you had spoken sharply to him just now, he would have feared your rage and my resentment; for even since his letter was rejected, he mentioned this design which has shocked me. As I have been told, his love retains the belief that it is well received by me; that I dread to marry you, whatever people may think, and should be rejoiced to see myself away from you.

Sgan.—He is mad!

Isa.—Before you he knows how to disguise; and his plan is to amuse you. Be sure the wretch makes sport of you by these fair speeches. I must confess that I am very unhappy. After all my pains to live honorably, and to repel the addresses of a vile seducer, I must be exposed to his vexatious and infamous designs against me!

Sgan.—There, fear nothing.

Isa.—For my part I tell you that if you do not strongly reprove such an impudent attempt, and do not find quickly means of ridding me of such bold persecutions, I will abandon all, and not suffer any longer the insults which I receive from him.

Sgan.—Do not be so troubled, my little wife. There, I am going to find him, to give him a good blowing up.

Isa.—Tell him at least plainly, so that it may be in vain for him to gainsay it, that I have been told of his intentions upon good authority; that, after this message, whatever he may undertake, I defy him to surprise me; and, lastly, that, without wasting any more sighs or time, he must know what are my feelings for you; that, if he wishes not to be the cause of some mischief, he should not require to have the same thing told twice over.

Sgan.—I will tell him what is right.

Isa.—But all this in such a way as to show him that I really speak seriously.

Sgan.—There, I will forget nothing, I assure you.

Isa.—I await your return impatiently. Pray, make as much haste as you can. I pine when I am a moment without seeing you.

Sgan.—There, ducky, my heart's delight, I will return immediately.

SCENE XII.

Sganarelle, alone.

Was there ever a girl more discreet and better behaved? Oh, how happy I am! and what a pleasure it is to find a woman just after my own heart! Yes, that is how our women ought to be, and not, like some I know, downright flirts, who allow themselves to be courted, and make their simple husbands to be pointed at all over Paris. (Knocks at Valère's door.) Hulloa, my enterprising, fine gallant!

SCENE XIII.

Valère, Sganarelle, Ergaste.

Valère.—Sir, what brings you here again?

Sganarelle.—Your follies.

Val.—How?

Sgan.—You know well enough what I wish to speak to you about. To tell you plainly, I thought you had more sense. You have been making fun of me with your fine speeches, and secretly nourish silly expectations. Look you, I wished to treat you gently; but you will end by making me very angry. Are you not ashamed, considering who you are, to form such designs as you do? to intend to carry off a respectable girl, and interrupt a marriage on which her whole happiness depends?

Val.—Who told you this strange piece of news, sir?

Sgan.—Do not let us dissimulate; I have it from Isabella, who sends you word by me, for the last time, that she has plainly enough shown you what her choice is; that her heart, entirely mine, is insulted by such a plan; that she would rather die than suffer such an outrage; and that you will cause a terrible uproar, unless you put an end to all this confusion.

Val.—If she really said what I have just heard, I confess that my passion has nothing more to expect. These expressions are plain enough to let me see that all is ended; I must respect the judgment she has passed.

Sgan.—If—— You doubt it then, and fancy all the complaints that I have made to you on her behalf are mere pretences! Do you wish that she herself should tell you her feelings? To set you right, I willingly consent to it. Follow me; you shall hear if I have added anything, and if her young heart hesitates between us two. (Goes and knocks at his own door.)

SCENE XIV.

Isabella, Sganarelle, Valère, Ergaste.

Isabella.—What! you bring Valère to me! What is your design? Are you taking his part against me? And do you wish, charmed by his rare merits, to compel me to love him, and endure his visits?

Sganarelle.—No, my love; your affection is too dear to me for that; but he believes that my messages are untrue; he thinks that it is I who speak, and cunningly represent you as full of hatred for him, and of tenderness for me; I wish, therefore, from your own mouth, infallibly to cure him of a mistake which nourishes his love.

Isa.—(To Valère.) What! Is not my soul completely bared to your eyes, and can you still doubt whom I love?

Val.—Yes, all that this gentleman has told me on your behalf, Madam, might well surprise a man; I confess I doubted it. This final sentence, which decides the fate of my great love, moves my feelings so much that it can be no offense if I wish to have it repeated.

Isa.—No, no, such a sentence should not surprise you. Sganarelle told you my very sentiments; I consider them to be sufficiently founded on justice, to make their full truth clear. Yes, I desire it to be known, and I ought to be believed, that fate here presents two objects to my eyes, who, inspiring me with different sentiments, agitate my heart. One by a just choice, in which my honor is involved, has

all my esteem and love; and the other, in return for his affection, has all my anger and aversion. The presence of the one is pleasing and dear to me, and fills me with joy; but the sight of the other inspires me with secret emotions of hatred and horror. To see myself the wife of the one is all my desire; and rather than belong to the other, I would lose my life. But I have sufficiently declared my real sentiments; and languished too long under this severe torture. He whom I love must use diligence to make him whom I hate lose all hope, and deliver me by a happy marriage from a suffering more terrible than death.

Sgan.—Yes, darling, I intend to gratify your wish.

Isa.—It is the only way to make me happy.

Sgan.—You shall soon be so.

Isa.—I know it is a shame for a young woman so openly to declare her love.

Sgan.—No, no.

Isa.—But, seeing what my lot is, such liberty must be allowed me; I can, without blushing, make so tender a confession to him whom I already regard as a husband.

Sgan.—Yes, my poor child, darling of my soul!

Isa.—Let him think, then, how to prove his passion for me.

Sgan.—Yes, here, kiss my hand.

Isa.—Let him, without more sighing, hasten a marriage which is all I desire, and accept the assurance which I give him, never to listen to the vows of another. (She pretends to embrace Sganarelle, and gives her hand to Valère to kiss.)

Sgan.—Oh, oh, my little pretty face, my poor little darling, you shall not pine long, I promise you. (To Valère.) There, say no more. You see I do not make her speak; it is me alone she loves.

Val.—Well, Madam, well, this is sufficient explanation. I learn by your words what you urge me to do; I shall soon know how to rid your presence of him who so greatly offends you.

Isa.—You could not give me greater pleasure. For, to

be brief, the sight of him is intolerable. It is odious to me, and I detest it so much——

Sgan.—Eh! Eh!

Isa.—Do I offend you by speaking thus? Do I——

Sgan.—Heavens, by no means! I do not say that. But in truth, I pity his condition; you show your aversion too openly.

Isa.—I cannot show it too much on such an occasion.

Val.—Yes, you shall be satisfied; in three days your eyes shall no longer see the object which is odious to you.

Isa.—That is right. Farewell.

Sgan.—(To Valère.) I pity your misfortune, but——

Val.—No, you will hear no complaint from me. The lady assuredly does us both justice, and I shall endeavor to satisfy her wishes. Farewell.

Sgan.—Poor fellow! his grief is excessive. Stay, embrace me: I am her second self. (Embraces Valère.)

SCENE XV.

Isabella, Sganarelle.

Sganarelle.—I think he is greatly to be pitied.

Isabella.—Not at all.

Sgan.—For the rest, your love touches me to the quick, little darling, and I mean it shall have its reward. Eight days are too long for your impatience; to-morrow I will marry you, and will not invite——

Isa.—To-morrow!

Sgan.—You modestly pretend to shrink from it; but I well know the joy these words afford you; you wish it were already over.

Isa.—But——

Sgan.—Let us get everything ready for this marriage.

Isa.—(Aside.) Heaven! Inspire me with a plan to put it off!

ACT III. SCENE I.

Isabella, alone.

Yes, death seems to me a hundred times less dreadful than this fatal marriage into which I am forced; all that I am doing to escape its horrors should excuse me in the eyes of those who blame me. Time presses; it is night; now, then, let me fearlessly entrust my fate to a lover's fidelity.

SCENE II.

Sganarelle, Isabella.

Sganarelle.—(Speaking to those inside the house.) Here I am once more; to-morrow they are going, in my name——

Isabella.—O Heaven!

Sgan.—Is it you, darling? Where are you going so late? You said when I left you that, being rather tired, you would shut yourself up in your room; you even begged that on my return I would let you be quiet till to-morrow morning——

Isa.—It is true; but——

Sgan.—But what?

Isa.—You see I am confused; I do not know how to tell you the reason.

Sgan.—Why, whatever can it be?

Isa.—A wonderful secret! It is my sister who now compels me to go out, and who, for a purpose for which I have greatly blamed her, has borrowed my room, in which I have shut her up.

Sgan.—What?

Isa.—Could it be believed? She is in love with that suitor whom we have discarded.

Sgan.—With Valère?

Isa.—Desperately! Her passion is so great that I can compare it with nothing; you may judge of its violence by her coming here alone, at this hour, to confide to me her love, and to tell me positively that she will die if she does

not obtain the object of her desire; that, for more than a year, a secret intercourse has kept up the ardor of their love; and that they had even pledged themselves to marry each other when their passion was new.

Sgan.—Oh, the wretched girl!

Isa.—That, being informed of the despair into which I had plunged the man whom she loves to see, she came to beg me to allow her to prevent a departure which would break her heart; to meet this lover to-night under my name, in the little street on which my room looks, where counterfeiting my voice, she may utter certain tender feelings, and thereby tempt him to stay; in short, cleverly to secure for herself the regard which it is known he has for me.

Sgan.—And do you think this——

Isa.—I? I am enraged at it. "What," said I, "sister, are you mad? Do you not blush to indulge in such a love for one of those people who change every day? To forget your sex, and betray the trust put in you by the man whom Heaven has destined you to marry?"

Sgan.—He deserves it richly; I am delighted by it.

Isa.—Finally my vexation employed a hundred arguments to reprove such baseness in her, and enable me to refuse her request for to-night; but she became so importunate, shed so many tears, heaved so many sighs, said so often that I was driving her to despair if I refused to gratify her passion, that my heart was brought to consent in spite of me; and, to justify this night's intrigue, to which affection for my own sister made me assent, I was about to bring Lucretia to sleep with me, whose virtues you extol to me daily; but you surprised me by your speedy return.

Sgan.—No, no, I will not have all this mystery at my house. As for my brother, I might agree to it; but they may be seen by some one in the street, and she whom I am to honor with my body must not only be modest and well-born; she must not even be suspected. Let us send the miserable girl away, and let her passion——

Isa.—Ah, you would overwhelm her with confusion, and she might justly complain of my want of discretion. Since

I must not countenance her design, at least wait till I send her away.

Sgan.—Well, do so.

Isa.—But above all, conceal yourself, I beg of you, and be content to see her depart without speaking one word to her.

Sgan.—Yes, for your sake I will restrain my anger; but as soon as she is gone, I will go and find my brother without delay. I shall be delighted to run and tell him of this business.

Isa.—I entreat you, then, not to mention my name. Good night; for I shall shut myself in at the same time.

Sgan.—Till to-morrow, dear—— How impatient I am to see my brother, and tell him of his plight! The good man has been victimized, with all his bombast! I would not have this undone for twenty crowns!

Isa.—(Within.) Yes, sister, I am sorry to incur your displeasure; but what you wish me to do is impossible. My honor, which is dear to me, would run too great a risk. Farewell, go home before it is too late.

Sgan.—There she goes, fretting finely, I warrant. Let me lock the door, for fear she should return.

Isa.—(Going out disguised.) Heaven! abandon me not in my resolve!

Sgan.—Whither can she be going? Let me follow her.

Isa.—(Aside.) Night, at least, favors me in my distress.

Sgan.—(Aside.) To the gallant's house! What is her design?

SCENE III.

Valère, Isabella, Sganarelle.

Valère.—(Coming out quickly.) Yes, yes; I will this night make some effort to speak to——. Who is there?

Isabella.—(To Valère.) No noise, Valère; I have forestalled you; I am Isabella.

Sganarelle.—(Aside.) You lie, minx; it is not she. She is too staunch to those laws of honor which you forsake; you are falsely assuming her name and voice.

Isa.—(To Valère.) But unless by the holy bonds of matrimony——

Val.—Yes; that is my only purpose; and here I make you a solemn promise that to-morrow I will go wherever you please to be married to you.

Sgan.—(Aside.) Poor deluded fool!

Val.—Enter with confidence. I now defy the power of your duped Argus; before he can tear you from my love, this arm shall stab him to the heart a thousand times.

SCENE IV.

Sganarelle, alone.

Oh, I can assure you I do not want to take from you a shameless girl, so blinded by her passion. I am not jealous of your promise to her; if I am to be believed, you shall be her husband. Yes, let us surprise him with this bold creature. The memory of her father, who was justly respected, and the great interest I take in her sister, demand that an attempt, at least, should be made to restore her honor. Hulloa, there! (Knocks at the door of a magistrate.)

SCENE V.

Sganarelle, a Magistrate, a Notary, Attendant with a lantern.

Magistrate.—What is it?

Sganarelle.—Your servant, your worship. Your presence in official garb is necessary here. Follow me, please, with your lantern-bearer.

Mag.—We were going——

Sgan.—This is a very pressing business.

Mag.—What is it?

Sgan.—To go into that house and surprise two persons who must be joined in lawful matrimony. It is a girl with whom I am connected, and whom, under promise of marriage, a certain Valère has seduced and got into his house. She comes of a noble and virtuous family, but——

Mag.—If that is the business, it was well you met us, since we have a notary here.

Sgan.—Sir?

Notary.—Yes, a notary royal.

Mag.—And what is more, an honorable man.

Sgan.—No need to add that. Come to this doorway; make no noise, but see that no one escapes. You shall be fully satisfied for your trouble, but be sure and do not let yourself be bribed.

Mag.—What! do you think that an officer of justice——

Sgan.—What I said was not meant as a reflection on your position. I will bring my brother here at once; only let the lantern-bearer accompany me. (Aside.) I am going to give this placable man a treat. Hulloa! (Knocks at Ariste's door.)

SCENE VI.

Ariste, Sganarelle.

Ariste.—Who knocks? Why, what do you want, brother?

Sganarelle.—Come, my fine teacher, my superannuated buck; I shall have something pretty to show you.

Ar.—How?

Sgan.—I bring you good news.

Ar.—What is it?

Sgan.—Where is your Léonor, pray?

Ar.—Why this question? She is, as I think, at a friend's house at a ball.

Sgan.—Eh! Oh, yes! Follow me; you shall see to what ball Missy is gone.

Ar.—What do you mean?

Sgan.—You have brought her up very well indeed. It is not good to be always finding fault; the mind is captivated by much tenderness; and suspicious precautions, bolts and bars make neither wives nor maids virtuous; we cause them to do evil by so much austerity; their sex demands a little freedom. Of a verity she has taken her fill of it, the artful girl; and with her, virtue has grown very complaisant.

Ar.—What is the drift of such a speech?

Sgan.—Bravo, my elder brother! it is what you richly deserve; I would not for twenty pistoles that you should have missed this fruit of your silly maxims. Look what our lessons have produced in these two sisters: the one avoids the gallants, the other runs after them.

Ar.—If you will not make your riddle clearer——

Sgan.—The riddle is that her ball is at Valère's; that I saw her go to him under cover of night, and that she is at this moment in his arms.

Ar.—Who?

Sgan.—Léonor.

Ar.—A truce to jokes, I beg of you.

Sgan.—I joke—— He is excellent with his joking! Poor fellow! I tell you, and tell you again, that Valère has your Léonor in his house, and that they had pledged each other before he dreamed of running after Isabella.

Ar.—This story is so very improbable——

Sgan.—He will not believe it, even when he sees it. I am getting angry; upon my word, old age is not good for much when brains are wanting! (Laying his finger on his forehead.)

Ar.—What! brother, you mean to——

Sgan.—I mean nothing, upon my soul! Only follow me. Your mind shall be satisfied directly. You shall see whether I am deceiving you, and whether they have not pledged their troth for more than a year past.

Ar.—Is it likely she could thus have agreed to this engagement without telling me?—me! who in everything, from her infancy, ever displayed toward her a complete readiness to please, and who a hundred times protested I would never force her inclinations.

Sgan.—Well, your own eyes shall judge of the matter. I have already brought here a magistrate and a notary. We are concerned that the promised marriage shall at once restore to her the honor she has lost; for I do not suppose you are so mean-spirited as to wish to marry her with this stain

upon her, unless you have still some arguments to raise you above all kinds of ridicule.

Ar.—For my part, I shall never be so weak as to wish to possess a heart in spite of itself. But, after all, I cannot believe——

Sgan.—What speeches you make! Come, this might go on forever.

SCENE VII.

Sganarelle, Ariste, a Magistrate, a Notary.

Magistrate.—There is no need to use any compulsion here, gentlemen. If you wish to have them married, your anger may be appeased on the spot. Both are equally inclined to it; Valère has already given under his hand a statement that he considers her who is now with him as his wife.

Ariste.—The girl——

Mag.—Is within, and will not come out unless you consent to gratify their desires.

SCENE VIII.

Valère, a Magistrate, a Notary, Sganarelle, Ariste.

Valère.—(At the window of his house.) No, gentlemen; no man shall enter here until your pleasure be known to me. You know who I am; I have done my duty in signing the statement, which they can show you. If you intend to approve of the marriage, you must also put your names to this agreement; if not, prepare to take my life before you shall rob me of the object of my love.

Sganarelle.—No, we have no notion of separating you from her. (Aside.) He has not yet been undeceived in the matter of Isabella. Let us make the most of his mistake.

Ariste.—(To Valère.) But is it Léonor?

Sgan.—Hold your tongue!

Ar.—But——

Sgan.—Be quiet!

Ar.—I want to know——

Sgan.—Again! Will you hold your tongue, I say?

Val.—To be brief: whatever be the consequence, Isabella has my solemn promise; I also have hers; if you consider everything, I am not so bad a match that you should blame her.

Ar.—What he says is not——

Sgan.—Be quiet! I have a reason for it. You shall know the mystery. (To Valère.) Yes, without any more words, we both consent that you shall be the husband of her who is at present in your house.

Magistrate.—The contract is drawn up in those very terms, and there is a blank for the name, as we have not seen her. Sign. The lady can set you all at ease by-and-by.

Val.—I agree to the arrangement.

Sgan.—And so do I, with all my heart. (Aside.) We will have a good laugh presently. (Aloud.) There, brother, sign; yours the honor to sign first.

Ar.—But why all this mystery——

Sgan.—The deuce! what hesitation. Sign, you simpleton.

Ar.—He talks of Isabella, and you of Léonor.

Sgan.—Are you not agreed, brother, if it be she, to leave them to their mutual promises?

Ar.—Doubtless.

Sgan.—Sign, then; I shall do the same.

Ar.—So be it. I understand nothing about it.

Sgan.—You shall be enlightened.

Mag.—We will soon return.

(Exeunt Magistrate and Notary into Valère's house.)

Sgan.—(To Ariste.) Now, then, I will give you a cue to this intrigue. (They retire to the back of the stage.)

SCENE IX.

Léonor, Sganarelle, Ariste, Lisette.

Léonor.—Ah, what a strange martyrdom! What bores all those young fools appear to me! I have stolen away from the ball, on account of them.

Lisette.—Each of them tried to make himself agreeable to you.

Léo.—And I never endured anything more intolerable. I should prefer the simplest conversation to all the babblings of these say-nothings. They fancy that everything must give way before their flaxen wigs, and think they have said the cleverest witticism when they come up, with their silly chaffing tone, and rally you stupidly about the love of an old man. For my part, I value more highly the affection of such an old man than all the giddy raptures of a youthful brain. But do I not see——

Sganarelle.—(To Ariste.) Yes, so the matter stands. (Perceiving Léonor.) Ah, there she is, and her maid with her.

Ariste.—Léonor, without being angry, I have reason to complain. You know whether I have ever sought to restrain you, and whether I have not stated a hundred times that I left you full liberty to gratify your own wishes; yet your heart, regardless of my approval, has pledged its faith, as well as its love, without my knowledge. I do not repent of my indulgence; but your conduct certainly annoys me; it is a way of acting which the tender friendship I have borne you does not merit.

Léo.—I know not why you speak to me thus; but believe me, I am as I have ever been; nothing can alter my esteem for you; love for any other man would seem to me a crime; if you will satisfy my wishes, a holy bond shall unite us tomorrow.

Ar.—On what foundation, then, have you, brother——

Sgan.—What! Did you not come out of Valère's house? Have you not been declaring your passion this very day? And have you not been for a year past in love with him?

Léo.—Who has been painting such pretty pictures of me? Who has been at the trouble of inventing such falsehoods?

SCENE X.

Isabella, Valère, Léonor, Ariste, Sganarelle, Magistrate, Notary, Lisette, Ergaste.

Isabella.—Sister, I ask you generously to pardon me, if, by the freedom I have taken, I have brought some scandal upon your name. The urgent pressure of a great necessity, suggested to me, some time ago, this disgraceful stratagem. Your example condemns such an escapade; but fortune treated us differently. (To Sganarelle.) As for you, sir, I will not excuse myself to you. I serve you much more than I wrong you. Heaven did not design us for one another. As I found I was unworthy of your love, and undeserving of a heart like yours, I vastly preferred to see myself in another's hands.

Valère.—(To Sganarelle.) For me, I esteem it my greatest glory and happiness to receive her, sir, from your hands.

Ariste.—Brother, you must take this matter quietly. Your own conduct is the cause of this. I can see it is your unhappy lot that no one will pity you, though they know you have been made a fool of.

Lisette.—Upon my word, I am glad of this. This reward of his mistrust is a striking retribution.

Léonor.—I do not know whether the trick ought to be commended; but I am quite sure that I, at least, cannot blame it.

Ergaste.—His star condemns him to be a cuckold; it is lucky for him he is only a retrospective one.

Sganarelle.—(Recovering from the stupor into which he had been plunged.) No, I cannot get the better of my astonishment. This faithlessness perplexes my understanding. I think that Satan in person could be no worse than such a jade! I could have sworn it was not in her. Unhappy he who trusts a woman after this! The best of them are always full of mischief; they were made to damn the whole world.

I renounce the treacherous sex forever, and give them to the devil with all my heart!

Erg.—Well said.

Ar.—Let us all go to my house. Come, M. Valère, to-morrow we will try to appease his wrath.

Lis.—(To the audience.) As for you, if you know any churlish husbands, by all means send them to school with us.

LES PLAIDEURS;

OR,

THE SUITORS.

A COMEDY BY RACINE.

(Translated by Irving Browne.)

PERSONAGES.

DANDIN, a Weak-minded Judge.
LÉANDRE, his Son, a gay youth.
CHICANEAU, a Litigious Burgess.
PETIT-JEAN, Porter to Dandin.
L'INTIMÉ, Secretary to Dandin.
A PROMPTER.
ISABELLE, Chicaneau's Daughter, in love with Léandre
COUNTESS, Litigious.

SCENE—A CITY IN LOWER NORMANDY.

The Suitors.

PRELUDE.

As *The Wasps* of Aristophanes is directed against the litigious class among the Athenians, so does *The Suitors* of Racine, adapted from that play, turn into ridicule the pettifoggery then so common in Paris and elsewhere in France. It was, as is said, a troublesome and disastrous lawsuit, to which Racine was a party, which suggested to him the subject of this, his only comedy. As the characters will unfold themselves, it will here be sufficient to remind the reader of the significance of some of their names. Dandin means simpleton; Intimé, respondent; Chicaneau, a pettifogger; Pimbesche, one of the countess' titles, an impertinent minx. While, as the author states, the aim of the comedy was to excite laughter, he indulges in no indecent ambiguities or coarse jocularities, such as are found in the pages of Aristophanes.

ACT FIRST. SCENE I.

Petit-Jean.—(Dragging a large bag of law papers.) He who in
the future puts his trust is mad, I say;
Those who laugh on Friday will cry on Saturday.
Into his service a judge took me last year,—

To be his porter, from Amiens brought me here.
To raise a laugh at us these Normans always help,
But when with wolves, 'tis said, one quickly learns to yelp.
Although from Picardy, good sense I did not lack,
But with the best of them I made my whip to crack.
They spoke to me uncovered—the men of consequence—
'Twas "Mr. de Little-John"—how great their deference!
But honor without money is a malady.
I was the model porter of a comedy.
No use for them to knock, and doff their hats to me,
No one gets in our house without the porter's fee.
No pay, no service—my door was shut the faster.
True, once in a while I accounted with my master,
And gave him something back. And I was always sent
To purchase hay and candles for the establishment,
But I lost naught by that. Indeed, for aught I saw,
I well might have afforded also to give the straw.
'Twas pity that on business he'd so set his heart.
At court he was the first to come, last to depart,
And often all alone—such actions would you think?—
He'd there lie down and sleep without his food or drink.
"Mr. Perrin-Dandin," sometimes to him I've said,
"Truth is, you're every day too early out of bed.
He who would travel far should ever spare his nag,
Eat, drink, and sleep—keep up spirits that never flag."
He took no heed. He's so laborious, and in fact
So little sleep he takes, that many say he's cracked.

SCENE II.

L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

L'Intimé.—Little-John, ho, Little-John!

Petit-Jean.— L'Intimé!
He is afraid that I have taken cold this way. (Aside.)

L'Int.—What the devil do you so early in the street?

Petit-J.—Is it necessary to stay there on one's feet,

Always to watch a man, and hear him yelling out?
What lungs he has! He is bewitched, beyond a doubt.

L'Int.—Good!

Petit-J.— Just now I said to him, rubbing up my hair,
That I would like to sleep. "Present thy formal prayer,
Whereas thou want'st to sleep," he said with gravity.
I fall asleep e'en now, only in telling thee.
Good-night.

L'Int.— But how good-night? What devil do I care,
If—but I hear a noise about the door up there.

SCENE III.

Dandin, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

Dandin.—(At the window.) Petit-Jean! L'Intimé!

L'Intimé.—(To Petit-Jean.) Peace!

Dand.— I am here alone.
My jailors then have made default, thank heaven, and gone.
If I should give them time they would again appear,
So, to enlarge ourselves, we'll leap the window here.
Court is adjourned.

L'Int.— O, how he jumps!

Petit-Jean.— O, sir, you're caught.

Dand.—Stop thief! Stop thief!

Petit-J.— O, we shall hold you as we ought.

L'Int.—No use of crying out, sir.

Dand.— Help here, quick! I'm beat.

SCENE IV.

Léandre, Dandin, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

Léandre.—Quick, now, a light! I hear my father in the street.
My father, why go out at this untimely hour?
Where go you in the night?

Dandin.— I wish t'assert my power.

Léan.—And over whom? All are asleep.

Petit-Jean.— In faith, I don't sleep much.

Léan.—What bags of documents! His very knees they touch.

Dand.—Within doors for three months I will not ask admission,
Of actions and of bags I've made a great provision.

Léan.—And who will feed you?

Dand.— The inn-keeper, I suppose.

Léan.—But father, where'll you sleep?

Dand.— At court and in my clothes.

Léan.—My father, it is better you shouldn't go out thus.
Sleep here, in your own house, and take your meals with us.
Suffer yourself to be by reason guided still,
And for your health——

Dand.— Why, I prefer to be unwell.

Léan.—You're that too much already. Take rest, for which you groan,
Or very soon you'll be reduced to skin and bone.

Dand.—Rest! Ah, your father by yourself you'd regulate;
Do you suppose a judge does naught but hold high state?
To scour the streets like gay young men in their carouses?
To run to balls by day, by night to gaming-houses?
Money is not earned so fast in my dominion.
Each one of thy fine ribbons costs me 'n opinion.
My gown makes you ashamed! And you a judge's son!
Would'st act the gentleman? Oh, fie, Dandin, have done!
Consider in my wardrobe and in my sleeping-room
The portraits of the Dandins; all these have worn the gown.
It is a good profession. Compare, too, price for price,
The New Year gifts of a good judge, and those of a marquis.
Remark what we shall be at the end of next December:—
What's then your gentleman? A post in the ante-chamber.

How many a one of these, the proudest, you've seen
linger
About my audience, and there to blow his finger,
Or hand in pocket, cloak on nose; finally to sit
And warm himself a while by turning at my spit.
This is the way one treats such folks. Ah, my poor lad,
Have you such inculcations from your dead mother had?
Poor Babonette! As I recall to memory,
She never failed at every term of court to be.
Never, no, never, would she leave me for a day,
And heaven only knows what oft she brought away.
Rather than empty-handed to our house return,
The very napkins at the inn she would not spurn.
This is the way fine houses are fixed up. Oh, you
Will always be a fool.

Léan.— Come, you'll be frozen through,
My father. Little-John, conduct your master back,
Put him to bed; in door and window leave no crack;
Let all be fastened, so he be from cold protected.

Petit-J.—Cause then at least a railing there to be erected.

Dand.—What! shall I be sent to bed in fashion thus abnormal?
Obtain an order that I sleep, in manner formal.

Léan.—For once, my father, lie down in any fashion.

Dand.—I'll go, but I intend to put you in a passion.
I will not go to sleep.

Léan.— Oh, well, that's all in vain.
Don't leave him here alone. You, L'Intimé, remain.

SCENE V.

Léandre, L'Intimé.

Léandre.—I wish to speak with you a moment here alone.

L'Intimé.—What! must you needs be guarded?

Léan.— That I well may own.
Alas! I have my weakness well as my father.

L'Int.—Oh, you would judge, then?

Léan.—(Pointing to the house of Isabelle.) Seek there the mystery rather.
You know that house?

L'Int.— I understand you now at last.
The dickens! Cupid has untimely got you fast.
Undoubtedly you'd speak to me of Isabelle.
A hundred times I've said, she's wise, she looks quite well;
But Mr. Chicaneau, you surely ought t' have pondered,
The greater part of his estate in law has squandered;
Whom does he not prosecute? I believe all France,
Unless he dies, in court will be compelled to dance.
Hard by the judge he's taken up his residence;
One forever sues, the other passes sentence.
Before your affair is done, the chances are that he
Will sue the parson, son-in-law, and notary.

Léan.—I know it well as you, but spite of all, oh, how, sir,
I pine for Isabelle.

L'Int.— Well, then, why not espouse her?
Nothing to do but speak—no need of preparation.

Léan.—But things move not so fast as your imagination.
Her father is a savege whom I greatly fear.
None but a bailiff, sergeant, or solicitor
Can ever see his daughter; the poor Isabelle,
Imprisoned in her house, laments invisible;
In grief she sees her youthful freshness dissipate,
In smoke my passion, and in lawsuits his estate.
She'll utterly be ruined unless he is restrained.
Do you not know some honest forger, to be gained
To serve his friends—for compensation, understand—
Some zealous sergeant?

L'Int.— Many such at your command.

Léan.—But still?

L'Int.— Oh, sir, if my deceased, lamented sire
Were still alive, he would accomplish your desire.
He'd do more in a day than some in half a year.
Graven in wrinkles on his face did writs appear.
He would arrest for you the carriage of a prince,

And nab the prince himself; and if in any province,
One of his bailiffs caught twenty castigations,
Father took nineteen-twentieths of the compensations.
But what do you require? Am not I the master's son?
I'll serve you.

Léan.— You?

L'Int.— Better than a sergeant would have done.

Léan.—You'd carry to the father a forged writ?

L'Int.— No doubt.

Léan.—And give this billet to the daughter?

L'Int.— Yes, why not?
I'm up to both.

Léan.— I hear a noise; come now,—I see;
We'll elsewhere go and regulate our scheme.

SCENE VI.

Chicaneau, Petit-Jean.

Chicaneau.—(Going and returning.) La Brie,
Let the house be guarded, I soon will home repair.
Don't permit a person to go above the stair.
Convey this letter bound to Maine unto the post,
And from my warren take three rabbits fit to roast,
And carry them to my solicitor to-day.
Make his clerk taste my wine if he should come this way.
Deliver him the bag that's in my room suspended.
Is that all? To visit me there perhaps intended
A certain tall, gaunt man who gets me evidence,
And swears himself whenever I am at a pinch;
Let him await. I fear my judge is out. The clock
Has sounded four. We'll go and at his entrance knock.

Petit-Jean.—(Opening the door.) Who's there?

Chica.— Can I his honor see?

Petit-J.—(Shutting the door.) No.

Chica.—(Knocking.) Well, can't I then
Say a word to Mr. Secretary?

Petit-J.—(Shutting the door.) No, again.

Chica.—(Knocking.) And Mr. Porter?

Petit-J.— That's myself.

Chica.—(Giving him money.) Ah, drink my health, I pray you, sir.

Petit-J.—(Taking the money.) Thanks, sir, and may you long have wealth. (Shutting the door.)
But come again to-morrow.

Chica.— My money then restore.
Truly, this world is growing wicked more and more.
I've seen the time when suits did not disturb one's ease;
You'd buy a half a dozen for a crown apiece.
But nowadays my whole estate is hardly more
Than would suffice to buy the porter at the door.
But madam the countess of Pimbesche approaches—
Affairs of haste, I think, from the way she rushes.

SCENE VII.

Countess, Chicaneau.

Chicaneau.—Madam, there's no admittance.

Countess.— Just as I prophesied.
To speak the truth, my servants will drive me soon beside
Myself; to get them out of bed, in vain I scold;
And every day I have to wake them, young and old.

Chica.—T' conceal himself he finds it indispensable.

Count.—To speak to him these two days I've not been able.

Chica.—My adversary's strong; I've everything to dread.

Count.—After what's done to me, no use to ope my head.

Chica.—If, however, I am right——

Count.— O sir, such decrees!

Chica.—I'll submit my case to you. Listen, if you please.

Count.—That you may see their baseness, sir, let me relate——

Chica.—At bottom there is really nothing——

Count.— Let me state——

Chica.—Here are the facts: Fifteen or twenty years an ass
Over my meadow had accustomed been to pass
And there disport himself, by which much waste he made,
For which before the village judge my plaint I laid.
The ass I attach. The appraiser's nominated,
At trusses two of hay the waste is estimated.
In short, with this award, after a year, they fling
Me empty out of court. And then an appeal I bring.
Now, while th' appeal in court was sleeping at its ease,—
Remark particularly, madam, if you please,—
My lawyer, Drolichon—no fool—on my petition,
Obtained by bribery a premature decision,
And thus I gain my cause. On that, what next is done?
My adversary stays the execution.
But while procedure on procedure thickens,
My adversary lets in my field his chickens.
To ascertain, unto the court it then seemed meet,
How much of grass one chicken in one day can eat.
Issue at last is joined. In fine, when everything
In that condition stands, the cause they say they'll bring
To 'n end, April fifteenth or sixteenth, 'fifty-six.
I write fresh score. I furnish evidence, and mix
Plaints, pleas and inquests, inspections compulsory,
Appraisals, transfers, three interlocutory
Orders, and grievances, fresh acts, reports, res gestæ;
I forge my name in letters issued by majesty;
Fourteen appointments, twenty writs, six allegations,
Productions six-and-twenty, twenty just'fications,
Judgment in short. My cause is swallowed in expense
Amounting to about five or six thousand francs.
Call you this doing right? Is this the way they ad-
judge?
After fifteen or twenty years! There's one refuge,—
The petition civil,—that still remains to me.
I am not quite defeated. But you, too, I see,
Are litigating?

Count.— Would to heaven!

Chica.— My books I'll burn.

Count.—I——

Chica.— Six thousand francs! Of hay, two trusses in return!

Count.—Sir, all my litigations they're seeking to restrain;
Four or five small issues are all that now remain;
One suit against my husband, and another suit
Against my father and my children; why they do't
I know not, nor can tell what woes they have denounced
Against me, miserable; but they have pronounced
This judgment: that, supplied with food and clothing due,
For th' balance of my life I am forbid to sue.

Chica.—To sue?

Count.— To sue.

Chica.— Truly, this is a dark affair.
I'm much surprised at it.

Count.— I'm driven to despair.

Chica.—To treat nobility as if of no account.
But your allowance, madam, is of some amount?

Count.—To manage to exist on it, no doubt I can, sir;
But living without law, for me will never answer.

Chica.—With our life-blood these folks will pamper their digestion,
And we can't say a word! But, if it's a fair question,
How long have you been lawing?

Count.— My memory is not clear.
Some thirty years or more.

Chica.— Why, that's not long.

Count.— Oh, dear!

Chica.—And how old may you be? You have a healthful visage.

Count.—Oh, some sixty years.

Chica.— Indeed! why, for lawsuits, this age
Is best of all.

Count.— Well, let them work; they've not yet done.
I'll sell my last chemise. I will have all or none.

Chica.—Now, madam, listen to me. This is what you must do.

Count.—Yes, sir, as if my father, I will believe in you.

Chica.—I would go unto my judge.
Count.— Oh, yes, sir, I will go.
Chica.—And throw myself before him.
Count.— Myself I there will throw;
I'm quite resolved on that.
Chica.— But now attend to me.
Count.—Oh, yes, you take the thing just as it ought to be.
Chica.—Have you got through now?
Count.— Yes.
Chica.— Then to my judge I would
Proceed informally.
Count.— This gentleman's so good!
Chica.—If you talk all the time, I must preserve my peace.
Count.—I'm very much obliged. I feel quite at my ease.
Chica.—I'd go and find my judge, and say to him——
Count.— Yes——
Chica.— Mind me——
And I would say to him, My lord——
Count.— Yes, sir——
Chica.— Bind me——
Count.—I don't wish to be bound, sir.
Chica.— Nothing of the sort.
Count.—And I will not be bound.
Chica.— Why, now, you're full of sport.
Count.—No.
Chica.— But, madam, you can't see what I'm driving at.
Count.—I must litigate, sir, or never can do that.
Chica.—But——
Count.— Again I tell you, sir, I will not be bound.
Chica.—Now, truly, when a woman's intellect's unsound——
Count.—You're mad yourself.
Chica.— Madam!
Count.— For what should they bind me?
Chica.—But, madam——

Count.— See the man's familiarity!

Chica.—But, madam——

Count.— Full of his tricks, this dirty fellow'd pass
For a wise counsellor!

Chica.— Madam!

Count.— With his young ass!

Chica.—You drive me mad!

Count.— Good man, go home and watch your grass.

Chica.—You weary me.

Count.— The fool!

Chica.— No witness near, alas!

SCENE VIII.

Petit-Jean, Countess, Chicaneau.

Petit-Jean.—What a disturbance they are making at our gate. Move on, sirs, if you wish to clamor at this rate.

Chicaneau.—Sir, I call you to witness——

Countess.— This fellow is a fool.

Chica.—You hear her, sir; remember this word against all rule.

Petit-J.—(To Countess.) T' escape you such expressions you ought not to allow.

Count.—Indeed! it's right for him to call me mad just now.

Petit-J.—(To Chicaneau.) Mad! you say wrong, sir. Why thus her feelings wound?

Chica.—I only counselled her.

Petit-J.— Oh!

Count.— Yes, to have me bound!

Petit-J.—Oh, sir!

Chica.— Why won't the woman hear me to the end?

Petit-J.—Oh, madam!

Count.— Who? am I to help this man contend?

Chica.—A prying woman!

Petit-J.— Oh, be still!

Count.— Trickster!

Petit-J.— Stop, do!

Chica.—Who dares no more to litigate?

Count.— What's that to you?
Make what you can of it, forger abominable,
You thief, you mischief-maker!

Chica.— Good, good! oh, the devil!
Sergeant, ho! a sergeant!

Count.— Bailiff! a bailiff here!

Petit-J.—In faith, they all need binding—suitors and judge—I fear.

ACT SECOND. SCENE I.

Léandre, L'Intimé.

L'Intimé.—Once more—that I should do the whole, it is not fair;
While I act bailiff, do you play commissioner.
You've but to follow me, in robe redundant;
You'll find the means to talk with her abundant.
Exchange for darker locks your wig of flaxen hair.
These suitors—will they dream who in the world you are?
Ah, when unto your father they go their court to pay,
You hardly even know whether it yet is day.
But this litigious countess do you not admire?—
To throw whom in my way good fortune did conspire?
Who, when she thought she saw me taken in the snare,
To Chicaneau has bid me this writ repair,
Assigning certain words as grounds of her attack,
By which he sought to make her out a maniac;
Mad, I say,—to be bound, and for other violence
And blasphemies, always of suits the ornaments.
But you have naught remarked of all my equipage.
Of a sergeant hav'n't I the face and carriage?

Léandre.—Ah, very well!

L'Int.— Since morning, violence to suffer,
I feel in soul and body six times tougher.
Let come what will, the writ is here, your letter there;

That Isabelle shall have the latter, I will swear.
But to get executed this contract which you see,
It's needful, close upon my heels you should follow me;
Pretending to inquire into all the matter,
Under her father's nose make love directly at her.

Léan.—But don't make love to father, and the daughter sue.

L'Int.—Father shall have the writ, daughter the billet-doux.
Let's enter. (Knocks at Isabelle's door.)

SCENE II.

Isabelle, L'Intimé.

Isabelle.—Who knocks?

L'Intimé.— A friend. (Aside.) The voice of Isabelle.

Isa.—Do you require to see some one, sir?

L'Int.— Mad'moiselle,
I have for you a trifling process, and I pray,
Honor me by taking it in the legal way.

Isa.—Excuse me, sir, these matters I don't understand;
Father will soon be here, whom you can then command.

L'Int.—He's not within then, now, miss?

Isa.— No; he's not arrived.

L'Int.—The summons, miss, it seems, with your own name's inscribed.

Isa.—I have no doubt, sir, you mistake me for another.
Without having lawsuits, their cost I can discover;
If every one like me detested litigation,
The like of you would seek some other occupation.
Good-bye.

L'Int.— Permit me——

Isa.— There's nothing I'll permit you.

L'Int.—It's not a summons.

Isa.— Nonsense!

L'Int.— It's a billet-doux.

Isa.—Still less then.

L'Int.— But peruse it.

Isa.— You cannot thus cheat me.

L'Int.—From Mr.——

Isa.— Good-bye.

L'Int.— Léandre.

Isa.— Speak in a lower key.
This is from Mr. ——?

L'Int.— Deuce take it! I'm quite out of breath.
To be heard, one's got to talk himself almost to death!

Isa.—Ah! L'Intimé! but please, my 'stonished senses pardon.
Give 't here.

L'Int.— But then my nose you'd shut the door quite hard on?

Isa.—Who would have known you, now, disguised in that condition?
Give 't me.

L'Int.— Then does your door give honest folks admission?

Isa.—Oh, give it up!

L'Int.— The pest!

Isa.— Well, then, if you think better,
You may retrace your footsteps, and retain your letter.

L'Int.—Here 'tis. Another time use more consideration.

SCENE III.

Chicaneau, Isabelle, L'Intimé.

Chicaneau.—I'm a fool and a thief then, in her estimation!
A sergeant's charged to thank her for the compliment;
And a dish of my own cooking has to her been sent.
I should be very sorry had this been otherwise,
And if with prior summons she should me surprise.
How now? Does any man about my daughter hover?
See, now, she reads a letter! Ah! 'tis from some lover.
Let us approach.

Isabelle.— Shall I believe? Can I suppose
Your master is sincere?

L'Intimé.— He takes no more repose
Than your father; frets himself; he'll (perceiving Chicaneau) this day make it plain,
That even if you sue him, you nothing have to gain.

Isa.—(Seeing Chicaneau.) It is my father! (To L'Intimé.)
Well, sir, you may tell your client,
That if he perseveres, he'll find us still defiant.
Here now, you may behold, sir, how your writ is used.
(Tears the letter.)

Chica.—What, then! it was a summons that my girl perused!
Some day you'll be the honor of your family,
My life, my daughter, you'll defend your property.
Come, I will buy for you the code of practice civil.
But tearing up law-writs will never do—the devil!

Isa.—(To L'Intimé.) Assure them, I have little fear of them, in short;
And let them do their worst, they only make me sport.

Chica.—Ah! don't get angry.

Isa.—(To L'Intimé.) Good-bye, sir, to you.

SCENE IV.

Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

L'Intimé.—(Taking a position to write.) Now come.
Let's have the facts.

Chicaneau.— Pray pardon her. How business 's done,
She has not been instructed. Besides, sir, if you please,
Behold! I can the pieces together put with ease.

L'Int.—No.

Chica.— I can read it well.

L'Int.— It's of no consequence,
I have a copy with me.

Chica.— Ah! that countenance
Impresses me—but strangely, the longer I reflect
Upon your face, it seems to me the less I recollect.
I know so many bailiffs.

L'Int.— About me, sir, inquire.
In my small way I well discharge what you require.

Chica.—May be. Whom do you represent?

L'Int.— A lady, sir, of rank,
Who greatly reverences you, and from her soul would thank
You, if you'd condescend to answer my citation,
And give her but a single word of reparation.

Chica.—Of reparation? Surely, I've done no one harm.

L'Int.—I can believe you, sir. You have a heart too warm.

Chica.—What then do you require?

L'Int.— She wishes, sir, that you,
Before some witnesses, would her the honor do
T' avow that she's quite sane, and not demented.

Chica.—My countess!

L'Int.— To remain your servant she's contented.

Chica.—I'm hers, to be commanded.

L'Int.— The proffer, sir,
Is kind.

Chica.— Yes, please assure her that an officer
From me shall bear to her all for which she contends.
What now! The beaten, on my faith, must make amends!
Let's see what she says here: "Sixth of January,
For having falsely said it was necessary—
Being thereto induced by the spirit of chicane—
To bind that high and mighty dame, Yolande Cudasne,
Countess of Pimbesche and Orbesche, and so forth.
It's ordered that immediately he go forth,
Unto the lady's lodgings, and there in clear voice, he—
In presence of four witnesses and a notary—"
Oh pshaw!—"said Hierome shall openly admit
That he esteems her sound in mind, and of good wit.
LE BON." This of your seigniory is then the title?

L'Int.—The same, to serve you, sir. (Aside.) To brass it out is vital.

Chica.—Le Bon! Writs signed that way have never been in vogue.
Mr. Le Bon—

L'Int.— Well, sir.

Chica.— I think you are a rogue.

L'Int.—I beg your pardon, sir, I am an honest man.

Chica.—But the most arrant knave from Rome to Caen.

L'Int.—Well, sir, 'tis not for me your notion to gainsay,
But you'll have the pleasure roundly for this to pay.

Chica.—I pay? In blows.

L'Int.— You're too polite such pains to take.
But you shall pay me well.

Chica.— You cause my head to ache.
Take that—that is your pay. (Striking him.)

L'Int.— A blow! Let's write it down:
"After a great resistance, aforesaid Hierome
Did strike, to wit, did hit, my sergeant on the chop,
With the said blow causing his hat in the mud to drop."

Chica.—Add that. (Kicking him.)

L'Int.— Good! The damages seem to accumulate.
I need this very much. "With this not satiate,
Aforesaid blows reiterated with a kick."
Courage! "More beside: aforesaid, in passion quick,
The present written statement tried to lacerate."
Come, that's not bad, dear sir. Why do you hesitate?
Don't give it up so soon.

Chica.— You rogue!

L'Int.— And, if it please ye,
A few blows with a stick will make my income easy.

Chica.—(Threatening him with a stick.) Indeed! I'll see if
he's a sergeant true.

L'Int.—(In position to write.) So, sir,
Strike on. I have four children to support.

Chica.— Oh, sir,
Your pardon; for a sergeant you I'd never take;
But his wit sometimes the cleverest will forsake.
I'll make apology for this surmise outrageous.
Yes, you are sergeant, sir, and sergeant most courageous.
Your hand; the like of you are such as I revere;

And I was educated always in the fear
Of God and of the sergeants, by my father late.

L'Int.—No; one can't flog people at such a trifling rate.

Chica.—Oh, sir, spare me the law.

L'Int.— Your servant. Contumacious,
A cudgel raised, a cuff, a kick, ah ha!

Chica.— Oh, gracious!
Pray pay me off in kind.

L'Int.— That they were dealt suffices.
They're worth to me a thousand crowns, by last advices.

SCENE V.

Léandre, in a commissioner's gown; Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

L'Intimé.—Here in the nick of time comes the commissionary.
Oh, sir, your presence here is very necessary.
This man, as you may see, of a most violent
Buffet in the face made me a little present.

Léandre.—To you, sir?

L'Intimé.— Yes, to me, speaking in proper person.
Item, a kick. Likewise, some names, to my aversion.

Léan.—Have you some evidence of this?

L'Int.— Why, sir, just feel it;
My cheek, still burning with the blow, will sure reveal it.

Léan.—A criminal affair; and in the act detected.

Chicaneau.—Woe's me!

L'Int.— His daughter, too—at least, one so suspected—
Has torn one of my papers all to bits, declaring
I gave her satisfaction, and with scornful bearing
She offers us defiance.

Léan.—(To L'Intimé.) Cause her to come to me.
A contumacious spirit reigns in this family.

Chica.—(Aside.) It's absolutely certain that I am bewitched.
If I know any of them, let my neck be stretched.

Léan.—What! strike an officer! But here's the rogue inhuman.

SCENE VI.

Isabelle, Léandre, Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

L'Intimé.—(To Isabelle.) Do you not recognize him?

Léandre.— Very well, young woman.
It's you, then, who have braved our man so naughtily,
And who have dared defy our power so haughtily?
Your name, now?

Isabelle.— Isabelle.

Léan.— Your age, young lady?

Isa.—Eighteen.

Chicaneau.— I think she is a little on the shady
Side—no matter.

Léan.— And are you with a mate provided?

Isa.—No, sir.

Léan.— You seem to smile. Set down that she derided.
(To L'Intimé.)

Chica.—Of husbands, sir, to daughters don't you chatter;
You see, such secrets are a family matter.

Léan.—Put down, he interrupts.

Chica.— Of that I never thought.
My daughter, take good care to answer as you ought.

Léan.—Oh, don't be discomposed, but answer at your leisure;
There's naught we wish to do that can give you displeasure.
Have you not just received from this officer in sight
A certain paper writing?

Isa.— Certainly, sir.

Chica.— That's right.

Léan.—Well, did you tear this paper without perusal?

Isa.—I did peruse it, please you.

Chica.— Good!

Léan.—(To L'Intimé.) Write as usual.
Why then did you destroy it? (To Isabelle.)

Isa.— Because I was afraid

To lay th' affair to heart my father would be made,
And that by reading it he'd greatly be annoyed.

Chica.—This is pure naughtiness. Thus process you'd avoid?

Léan.—You did not, then, destroy it out of willfulness?
Or in contempt of those who in it you address?

Isa.—For them I neither scorn nor anger entertain.

Léan.—(To L'Intimé.) Write that.

Chica.— That she is like her father, sir, is plain.
She answers very well, sir.

Léan.— Yet, you still exhibit
'Gainst those who wear the gown an evident bad spirit.

Isa.—To me the robe has hitherto been an aversion,
But now I rapidly experience a conversion.

Chica.—Poor child! Come, come, as soon as it is in my power,
I'll mate you well, provided I escape the dower.

Léan.—You anxiously desire that justice be appeased?

Isa.—I'd rather anything than to have you displeased.

L'Int.—Sign, sir.

Léan.— I trust, at least, where'er we have it,
You will corroborate your affidavit?

Isa.—Rest assured, sir, Isabelle by her word will stand.

Léan.—Sign, then. That's well. Justice can nothing more demand.
Come, don't you also sign, sir? (To Chicaneau.)

Chica.— Oh, yes, most willingly.
I subscribe what she has said, unhesitatingly.

Léan.—(In a low tone, to Isabelle.) Everything goes bravely on, and, as I designed,
A legal contract, written in due form, he's signed,
And he will be condemned by his own signature.

Chica.—He's taken with her wit. What's he saying to her?

Léan.—Discreet as you are beautiful remain, and you
Will find all well. Bailiff, conduct her home. Adieu!
And you, sir, march yourself. (To Chicaneau.)

Chica.— Where, sir?

Léan.— Just follow me.

Chica.—Whither?

Léan.— You'll find. Come, in the name of majesty.

Chica.—How now!

SCENE VII.

Léandre, Chicaneau, Petit-Jean.

Petit-Jean.— Has no one seen my master there?—hallo!
Which way did he go out? By the door or window?

Léandre.—What next?

Petit-J.— I cannot tell what's happened to his son;
The father's gone where destined by the evil one.
For spices—perquisites—incessantly he howled,
And, unsuspecting, I about the kitchen prowled
To find the pepper-bottle, and behind my back
He's disappeared.

SCENE VIII.

Dandin, at a dormer window; Léandre, Chicaneau, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

Dandin.— Peace, peace! Why don't they stop that clack?

Léandre.—Oh, gracious heav'n!

Petit-Jean.— Look there! my faith! he's on the roof.

Dand.—What folks are you down there? And what is your behoof?
And who are you in gowns?—lawyers, or I'm in error.
Come, speak.

Petit-J.— You'll find that to the cats he'll carry terror.

Dand.—To see my secretary did you take precaution?
Go first and ask him if I understand your motion.

Léan.—That I should force him from that place is urgent.
Keep a sharp lookout on your prisoner, sergeant.

Petit-J.—O! ho!

Léan.— If you'd preserve your physical condition,
Keep still and follow me.

SCENE IX.

Countess, Dandin, Chicaneau, L'Intimé.

Dandin.— Now quick, state your petition.

Chicaneau.—Sir, without your warrant they took me prisoner.

Countess.—Good heav'n! In the cock-loft I perceive his honor! What is he doing there?

L'Intimé.— He's holding audience. The field is clear for you.

Chica.— They do me violence, Your honor—injure me, and therefore I come here To enter my complaint.

Count.— To make complaint I appear.

Chica. and Count.—My adversary, sir, you see before you placed.

L'Int.—Zounds! In this inquiry I wish to be embraced.

Chica., Count., L'Int.—My lord, I come before you on a trifling matter.

Chica.—Now, sirs, to state our rights one at a time is better.

Count.—His rights! All that he states is nothing but deception.

Dand.—What have they done?

Chica., Count., L'Int.— He's slandered me beyond conception.

L'Int.—Besides a blow, your honor, which makes me most abused.

Chica.—Your honor, I am cousin to one of your nephews.

Count.—By Father Cordon, sir, my action will be stated.

L'Int.—To your apothecary, sir, I am related.

Dand.—Your titles?

Count.— I am countess.

L'Int.— Bailiff.

Chica.— I'm citizen. Gentlemen——

Dand.—(Retiring from the window.) Proceed; I'll hear all three together, then.

Chica.—Gentlemen——

L'Int.— See there, he's off! Our chance diminishes.

Count.—Alas!

Chica.— Ah, what! Is it thus the session finishes?
I haven't had a chance two words yet to disclose.

SCENE X.

Léandre, without his gown; Chicaneau, Countess, L'Intimé.

Léandre.—Gentlemen, be good enough to leave us in repose.

Chicaneau.—Can any one come in, sir?

Léan.— Not till I die first.

Chica.—Alas! But why? In one small hour, or two at worst,
I'd finish.

Léan.— But I say, we can't receive a caller.

Countess.—It's well to shut the door against that brawler.
But I——

Léan.— No one can enter, I assure you still.

Count.—Oh, sir, but I will enter.

Léan.— Perhaps.

Count.— I'm sure I will.

Léan.—How? through the window?

Count.— The door.

Léan.— That's to be tried.

Chica.—Although until this evening I remain outside——

SCENE XI.

Léandre, Chicaneau, Countess, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

Petit-Jean.—(To Léandre.) No matter what we do, they do not
seem to mind.
Zounds! in our lower room I have the judge confined,
Quite near the cellar.

Léandre.— Now then, once and forever,
Father shall not be seen.
Chicaneau.— Ah, well! If, however,
It is necessary that I should see him more——
(Dandin appears at an air-hole.)
What do I see? 'Tis he whom heaven doth restore!
Léan.—What! At the air-hole?
Petit-J.— He's possessed, beyond a doubt.
Chica.—Sir——
Dandin.— Impertinent! But for you I should be out.
Chica.—Your honor——
Dand.— You're a fool. Go, get you back.
Chica.—My lord, will you not be so good——
Dand.— My head you'll crack.
Chica.—Sir, I have directed——
Dand.— Keep still, you are commanded.
Chica.—There should be sent to you——
Dand.— To jail he is remanded.
Chica.—Some quarter casks of wine.
Dand.— But I'll never listen to't.
Chica.—It is the best of muscat.
Dand.— Explain again your suit.
Léan.—(To L'Intimé.) We must surround them on all sides, with celerity.
Countess.—That which he speaks is full, sir, of insincerity.
Chica.—Oh, sir, I speak the truth.
Dand.— Now let her tell her tale.
Count.—Hear me, your honor.
Dand.— Oh, my breath begins to fail.
Chica.—My lord——
Dand.— You stifle me.
Count.— Then hither turn your eye.
Dand.—She stifles me. Oh, oh!
Chica.— You're dragging me; oh, my!
Take care, I'm falling!

Petit-J.— There they go, upon my word,
Down in the cellar, all!

Léan.— Fly! quick as any bird;
Hasten to their relief. But I at least suggest,
That Mr. Chicaneau, since he's down there, would best
Remain there all the day. See to it, L'Intimé.

L'Intimé.—You watch the air-hole, then.

Léan.— I will. Quick now! I say.

SCENE XII.

Countess, Léandre.

Countess.—The wretch! He would his honor's judgment prejudice.
(Through the air-hole.) Don't you believe him, sir, when he alleges this.
He's not a single witness. He's only lying.

Léan.—What are you telling them? Perhaps they're dying.

Count.—Oh, sir, he'll make him credit anything he'll choose.
Oh, let me enter.

Léan.— No, ma'am, that I must refuse.

Count.—The present of that wine, 'tis easily detected,
The judgment of the son and father has infected.
Patience! As may be needful I'll protest, and ask
Relief against his lordship and the quarter cask.

Léan.—Go then, and cease to give us so much worriment.
What maniacs! I've never seen such merriment.

SCENE XIII.

Dandin, Léandre, L'Intimé.

L'Intimé.—My lord, where are you going? Of danger you make sport,
And yet you're limping badly.

Dandin.— I'm going to hold court.

Léandre.—Father, how now? To dress your wounds give us permission.
A surgeon call.

Dand.— He may attend me at the session.

Léan.—But oh! my father, stay——

Dand.— Oh, I can see through you;
That which suits your purpose you think to make me do.
You seem to have neither love nor reverence for me.
I'm not permitted now to render a decree.
Complete your work, then. Quickly take this bag.

Léan.— Go easy,
My father. Here's a chance to compromise, an 't please ye.
If without holding court existence is but anguish,
If to render justice continually you languish,
Still, 'tis unnecessary far abroad to roam,
But exercise your talents in a court at home.

Dand.—You should not satirize the magistrates severely.
I wish to be a judge not in appearance merely.

Léan.—On the other hand, you shall be judge without appeal,
With jurisdiction civil and criminal as well.
And every day two sessions you can hold with ease;
At home do nothing else but render your decrees.
A servant fails to give a tumbler a good washing—
Condemn him to a fine; if broken, to a thrashing.

Dand.—In this there's something, surely. Your reasoning's exquisite.
But then, again—will any pay me my perquisite?

Léan.—You can detain their wages as security.

Dand.—It seems to me he's talking very sensibly.

Léan.—Against one of your neighbors——

SCENE XIV.

Dandin, Léandre, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

Petit-Jean.— Stop! Stop him! Catch him, do!

Léandre.—(To L'Intimé.) Ah, 'tis my prisoner, without doubt,
who's escaped from you.

L'Intimé.—No, no, fear nothing.

Petit-J.— All is lost. Your dog, Citron,
Has been and of our capon left nothing but the bone.
Nothing is safe before him. Whate'er he finds he takes.

Léan.—Now, father, here's a case for you. But mercy sakes!
Put yourselves after him! Run, all!

Dandin.— Not so much clatter·
Softly; an apprehension private suits this matter.

Léan.—Father, make an example worthy of belief;
Punish with severity this domestic thief.

Dand.—But I wish to try the case with due formality;
Counsel should be assigned, for impartiality;
But we have none.

Léan.— Ah, well, it self-defense is
T' appoint your porter and amanuensis.
I think you'll make of each an excellent advocate—
They are quite ignorant.

L'Int.— How wrong! for with a state
Of drowsiness I can a judge as soon infect
As any one.

Petit-J.— As I know naught, nothing expect.

Léan.—This being your first case, it shall be well prepared.

Petit-J.—But I can't read at all.

Léan.— A prompter 'll give the word.

Dand.—Now let us go prepare. And, gentlemen, no chicane;
We close our eyes to bribes, to our ears intrigue is vain.
Master Little-John the complainant represents;
You, Master L'Intimé, appear for the defense.

ACT THIRD. SCENE I.

Chicaneau, Léandre, Prompter.

Chicaneau.—Yes, this is the way, sir, they manage each affair;
I know not either bailiff nor commissioner.
Every word I tell you's true.

Léandre.— I believe it all;
But if you'll credit me, you'd better let it fall.
It is in vain to think of prosecuting both;
To trouble your repose as well as theirs you're loth.
Already you have spent three-fourths of your estate,
Bags heaped on one another with papers to inflate;
And all in this pursuit against your interest.

Chica.—That your advice is good is certainly confessed,
And I intend ere long your counsel to pursue,
But first, with intercession try what I can do.
Soon as his honor Dandin gives an audience,
I will bring my daughter with greatest diligence.
She's very truthful; let them interrogate her;
And even than myself she will answer better.

Léan.—Go, and return again. You shall have justice done.

Prompter.—Oh, what a man!

Léan.— I use a strange deception,
But father is a man driven to desperation;
We'll amuse him with a case in imagination.
I have another wish, and that's for condemnation
Of this mad fool who brings all into litigation.
But look you, close upon our heels come in our mates.

SCENE II.

Dandin, Léandre; L'Intimé and Petit-Jean in gowns; the Prompter.

Dandin.—Come, who are you down there?

Léandre.— These are the advocates.

Dand.—(To the Prompter.) And you?

Prompter.— I come to help their halting memory.

Dand.—I understand. And you?

Léan.— I'm the auditory.

Dand.—Commence then.

Prom.— Gentlemen——

Petit-Jean.— Oh take a lower key,

For if you prompt so loud they never can hear me.
My lord——

Dand.— Put on your hat.

Petit-J.— Oh, sir——

Dand.— I say put on your hat.

Petit-J.—Oh, sir, I think I understand good breeding better'n that.

Dand.—Then don't put on your hat.

Petit-J.—(Putting on his hat, to Prompter.) Well, Prompter, now be dumb;
That which I know the best is my exordium.
Your honors, when I consider with exactitude
The world's inconstancy, full of vicissitude;
When I behold so many races different,
So many wandering stars, not one star permanent;
When I view Cæsar and consider his fortune;
When I behold the sun, when I behold the moon;
When I behold the state of the Babylonians,
Transferred from Persia to the Macedonians;
When I behold the Lorraines, at first despotical,
Pass to a democracy, then grow monarchical;
When I behold Japan——

L'Intimé.— When will he stop beholding?

Petit-J.—Oh dear! why will he interrupt me with his scolding?
I cannot speak a word.

Dand.— Restive attorney,
Why don't you let him finish up his journey?
When I'm a-sweat to learn if he 'n Japan discover
A harbor for his capon, and thus his wandering's over,
You've interrupted him with your discourse absurd.
Now, advocate, proceed.

Petit-J.— I can't. I've lost the word.

Léan.—Out with it, Little-John. Your début none derides.
But why d'ye keep your arms stuck close against your sides?
And stand upon your feet like a statue perpendicular?
Come, brighten up, don't be afraid, we're not particular.

Petit-J.—(Moving his arms.) When—I behold—when—I behold——

Léan.— Well, what? you dunce?

Petit-J.—Why, how can one expect to course two hares at once?

Prom.—'Tis said—

Petit-J.— 'Tis said—

Prom.— In the—

Petit-J.— In the—

Prom.— Metamorphosis—

Petit-J.—What say?

Prom.— That the metem—

Petit-J.— That the metem—

Prom.— Sychosis—

Petit-J.—Sychosis—

Prom.— Oh dear! The horse—

Petit-J.— The horse—

Prom.— Again said!

Petit-J.—Again—

Prom.— The dog—

Petit-J.— The dog—

Prom.— Oh blockhead!

Petit-J.— The blockhead—

Prom.—Plague take this advocate!

Petit-J.— The plague on you be cast!
See t'other fellow, too, with 's face like Lenten fast!
Go to the devil, all!

Dand.— Come, on to business push.

Petit-J.—Oh dear me! what's the use of beating round the bush?
They teach me to speak words in length a fathom each,
Big-sounding words that would from here to Pontoise reach.
Now, I don't see the sense of all this hurly-burly;
In short, to find a fowl I came this morning early;
There's naught your dog won't steal, if it but take the shape on

Of fowl; and now he's gone and gobbled up our capon—
A capon from the Maine; here's nothing to decide;
The first time that I catch him, I'll soundly tan his hide.

Léan.—A very neat conclusion, worthy of your setting out!

Petit-J.—Oh, carp who will. One knows my meaning without doubt.

Dand.—Produce your witnesses.

Léan.— Well said, if he's got any.
They don't come for the wish; they cost a deal of money.

Petit-J.—We have a plenty, though, and they're beyond reproach.

Dand.—Let them present themselves.

Petit-J.— I have them in my pouch.
Behold them! here they are—the capon's legs and head!
Examine them and judge.

L'Int.— I object to them.

Dand.— Well said!
But why object?

L'Int.— They're from the Maine; their trade's to cozen.

Dand.—True, these Maine witnesses crowd in here by the dozen.

L'Int.—Your honor——

Dand.— Tell me, sir, shall you be expeditious?

L'Int.—I cannot answer anything.

Dand.— Why, that's judicious.

L'Int.—(In a tone ending in a squeal.) My lords, all that can astound the culpable,
All that which mortals hold the most redoubtable,
Against us here assembled, seems to be in league;
In short, I mean to say, eloquence and intrigue.
The fame of the deceased on one hand stands t' admonish,
On t'other, eloquence doth equally astonish—
The shining eloquence of Master Little-John.

Dand.—Say, can't you soften down the shrillness of your tone?

L'Int.—(In his ordinary voice.) Oh, yes; I've many of them.
(In a pompous tone.) Whatever diffidence
May justly be aroused by said fame and eloquence,

We rest upon your truth as hope leans on the anchor,
And trust your sense of right to mitigate all rancor.
Before the great Dandin innocence is power;
Yes, before the Cato of Normandy the Lower,
That sun of equity whose beams have never languished.
Vict'ry delights the gods; but Cato's for the vanquished.

Dand.—Now, truly, he pleads well.

L'Int.— To make no further pause,
I take my cue, and go to the merits of my cause.
Aristotle wisely says, in his Politikon——

Dand.—Why, advocate, the point is now about a capon,
And not of Aristotle's views political.

L'Int.—But the authorities Peripatetical
Have proved that good and evil——

Dand.— In courts of equity
Your Aristotle hasn't the least authority.
Come, to the point.

L'Int.— Pausanias, in his Corinthiacs——

Dand.—To the point.

L'Int.— Rebuffe——

Dand.— To the point, I tell you.

L'Int.— The great Jacques——

Dand.—The point, the point, the point!

L'Int.— Harmenopul, in fact——

Dand.—I'll render judgment now.

L'Int.— Oh dear, how rash you act.
Then have the facts. (Quickly.) This dog, to the kitchen drawing nigh,
A capon plump and sweet within he did espy;
Now, he for whom I speak with hunger there was hasting;
He against whom I speak was nicely plucked and basting;
Then he for whom I speak seized on, took off, secreted
Him against whom I speak. The larder thus depleted,
He's taken on a writ. Counsel plead pro and con;
A day's fixed. I'm to speak, I speak, and now I've done.

Dand.—Tut, tut, tut, tut! Learn better how to try your case.
Th' irrelevant you give at a deliberate pace,
Th' important you run over at a gallop strong.

L'Int.—The former, may it please you, sir, is fine.

Dand.— It's wrong.
Were causes ever known to be in this way pleaded?
What say th' assembly?

Léan.— This style is now most heeded.

L'Int.—(In a vehement tone.) Where were we, gentlemen?
They come. And how come?
They chase my client, and they force a mansion.
What mansion? Why the mansion of our own judge.
They force the cellar which serves us for refuge.
Of brigandage they then accuse us, and of theft;
We're then dragged headlong forth, and to our accusers left,
To Master Little-John, your honor—I attest.
Who does not know the law, If any Dog (Digest
De vi, and see the paragraph Caponibus),
Is manifestly contrary to such abuse?
And when it turned out true that my poor client Citron
Had eaten all or most of the aforesaid capon,
Against this trifling deed you will not hesitate
To weigh our former actions, and let them mitigate.
When has my client ever been reprimanded?
By whom has this your house always been defended?
When have we failed to bark at robbers in our town?
Witness three low attorneys, from whom we've torn the gown.
They show you certain fragments to accuse us by;
Receive these other fragments to help us justify.

Petit-J.—But Adam——

L'Int.— You keep still.

Petit-J.— L'Intimé——

L'Int.— You're too rude.

Petit-J.—He's hoarse!

L'Int.— Shut up!

Dand.— Repose a moment, then conclude.

L'Int.—(In a wheezing voice.) Since, then, a moment's rest to
catch our breath 's permitted,
And formal peroration 's to be intermitted,
I come, without omission or prevarication,
Compendiously t' enunciate an explication,
And hold up to your eyes a general exposition
Of all my cause, and all my client's imposition.

Dand.—T' repeat the same thing twenty times, he prefers by
far,
Than once t' abridge. Oh, man, or whatever else you are,
Devil, conclude; or heav'n seize thee with damnation!

L'Int.—I finish now.

Dand.— Oh!

L'Int.— Before the world's creation——

Dand.—Oh, skip over to the flood!

L'Int.— Well, then, before the birth
Of time, of the material system, and of earth—
The world, the universe, and nature universal,
Lay buried in the bosom of the material.
The elements—the fire, the earth, the air, the water—
Piled up or buried, are naught but heaps of matter,
A dire confusion, a mass of matter formless,
Chaos, disorder, and brooding rout enormous.
As Ovid sings, there was, on all the face of nature—
Called chaos by the Greeks—one rude indefinite feature.
(Dandin, being sleepy, nods and falls heavily.)

Léan.—My father, what a tumble!

Petit-J.— See how he drops his head!

Léan.—Come, father, rouse yourself!

Petit-J.— Your honor, are you dead?

Léan.—Father! I say.

Dand.— Well, well? what? who? a man, it seems.
Truly, I've been asleep, and had quite pleasant dreams.

Léan.—Come, sir, decide.

Dand.— To the galleys!

Léan.— You hardly can, sir,
Punish a dog that way.

Dand.— No more—you have my answer.
What with the world and chaos, I've such a muddled pate!
Wind up this cause.

L'Int.—(Presenting the puppies to him.) Come hither, you family desolate;
Come, little ones, whom he would orphans render,
Give utterance to your understandings tender.
Yes, gentlemen, you here behold our misery;
Restore a father to his orphan'd family;
Our father dear, by whom we were engender'd—
Our father dear——

Dand.— This issue can't be tender'd.

L'Int.—Our father, gentlemen——

Dand.— Don't keep up such discord.
They're making a great muss——

L'Int.— Behold our tears, my lord!

Dand.—Why, now, I seem to be quite taken with compassion;
Oh, what a thing to touch the feelings in this fashion!
I am quite bothered here. The fact alleged so presses;
A crime 's averred; th' accused himself confesses.
But if he is condemned, equal 's th' embarrassment.
For then these pretty children must be to th' asylum sent.
But I can't see a person. I am occupied.

SCENE III.

Dandin, Léandre, Chicaneau, Isabelle, L'Intimé, Petit-Jean.

Chicaneau.—Sir——

Dandin.— Court for you is open, and for none beside.
Adieu—but who is that young lady going thither?

Chica.—That is my daughter, sir.

Dand.— Quick! go and call her hither.

Isabelle.—But you are occupied.

Dand.— I've nothing to do more.
(To Chicaneau.) If she's your child, sir, why not tell me so before?

Chica.—My lord——

Dand.— Better than you she knows where merit lies.
Say—but she's pretty, and then what tender eyes!
But that's not all, my child; prudence is required.
To see such youthfulness I am with joy inspired.
D'ye know that I was formerly a gay young beau?
We have been talked about.

Isa.— You must have been, I know.

Dand.—Tell us, whom would you like to cause to lose his action?

Isa.—No one.

Dand.— But speak. You can imagine no exaction
I'd not perform.

Isa.— You oblige me, sir, too much, in fact.

Dand.—Have you, for instance, never seen a person racked?

Isa.—No, and believe I never would for my salvation.

Dand.—I wish you'd gratify for this your inclination.

Isa.—Oh, when th' unhappy suffer, can any one stand by?

Dand.—Why, to fill an hour or two it answers passably.

Chica.—Sir, I've come here to say to you——

Léandre.— Now, in a word,
Sir, I'll explain to you the whole affair you've heard.
It is about a marriage. And to begin, 'tis due
To tell you all's arranged, and now depends on you.
The lady wishes it; the lover, too, is sighing;
And what the lady wishes, the father is desiring.
It is for you to judge.

Dand.— Marry at once, I say;
To-morrow, if you wish it; if need be, to-day.

Léan.—Your father in the law, miss; come hither, this is he.
Salute him.

Chica.— How is this?

Dand.— What is the mystery?

Léan.—That which you have said, perform, and not undo it.

Dand.—Since, then, I have decided, I'll not review it.

Chica.—Young ladies are not given without their own consent.

Léan.—Doubtless; to charming Isabelle to leave it I'm content.

Chica.—Art thou then silent? Come, now, speak; it is for thee
To speak.

Isa.— I dare not, father, appeal from the decree.

Chica.—But I appeal myself.

Léan.—(Showing him a paper.) Behold this writing. You're
Not going to appeal from your own signature?

Chica.—What's this?

Dand.— It is a contract that cannot be impeached.

Chica.—But I will be revenged. I have been overreached.
Of more than twenty lawsuits this will be the source.
He's got the daughter — well! He shall not have the
purse.

Léan.—Oh, sir, who says we looked for money when we sought
her?
Keep your goods and welcome, but leave to us your
daughter.

Chica.—Ah!

Léan.— Sir, are you pleased with the session's termination?

Dand.—Indeed I am. But give me scope for litigation,
And pass the rest of life with you I would as lief.
But let the barristers in future be more brief.
And now our criminal?

Léan.— Let all in joy be merged.
Pardon, father, pardon.

Dand.— Well, let him be discharged.
Daughter-in-law, I do this only for your sake.
In view of other trials, let us respite take.

THE
PHILOSOPHER DUPED BY LOVE
(LE PHILOSOPHE DUPÉ DE L'AMOUR)

PLAYED AT

THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE THEATRE, PARIS,

BY THE

ITALIAN COMEDIANS
IN ORDINARY TO THE KING.

(*Translated by W. H. H. Chambers.*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DOCTOR PANTALOGUE, a Philosopher.

MIRTO, his Wife.

URGANTIA, an old maid Astrologer.

LUCINDA, pupil of Pantalogue.

CELIO, disciple of Pantalogue.

HARLEQUIN, Celio's Servant.

SCENE—THE SQUARE AT PADUA IN FRONT OF THE HOUSES OF PANTALOGUE AND URGANTIA.

The Philosopher Duped by Love.

ARGUMENT.

The philosopher, Dr. Pantalogue, has received from a dying Frenchman his daughter Lucinda as a ward, and has lodged her in strict seclusion at the house of the astrologer Urgantia, a homely old maid. The doctor is raising Lucinda in a precise scientific manner, and by his precepts and the philosophical education he is giving her, believes he has effectually destroyed all womanly weakness or inclination to love; in reality, he has fallen in love with her himself. Mirto, the doctor's wife, suspects this and begs Celio, a handsome young disciple, to seek Lucinda out and endeavor to supplant the doctor in her affections. Pantalogue overhears his wife's request and asks Urgantia to impersonate Lucinda.

Celio and Harlequin meet Urgantia and beg her to grant them an interview with Lucinda, but when told that she herself is Lucinda the former retires in disgust. Urgantia has taken a fancy to Celio and is resolved to bestow her love upon him; so, after making the stars promise all manner of good things to Harlequin, she gives him a love-letter for his master. Meanwhile, the

real Lucinda, in whom the instinct of womanhood has been awakened by a love passage between two birds and by a mirroring brook, comes on the scene and tells Harlequin she is Lucinda. He, believing her to be a witch, is frightened at the sudden metamorphosis and expresses wonder. She, scenting a trick, allows him to believe the two Lucindas are one and sends also a message to his master. These messages and the two Lucindas, together with the darkness, lead to some amusing mistakes. Finally Lucinda resolves to forego philosophy to marry Celio. The doctor and Urgantia are discomfited, and the comedy closes with an invitation by Harlequin to applaud, after the Roman fashion.

Enter the doctor and Mirto.

Doctor.—What a noise! what an infernal racket! silence, for heaven's sake, silence, wife.

Mirto.—What! I keep silence? Perhaps you think I can be made to do so. That's for women to do who have something to reproach themselves with, but I, whose fidelity is so well known, I have the right to——

Doc.—Deafen everybody with that infernal tongue!

Mir.—And why shouldn't I speak? Have I been untrue to you?

Doc.—(Aside.) And who the devil would wish to be the other half?

Mir.—I fear no one; honor is a precious jewel I have always carefully preserved, but I do not wish to be the only faithful one, Pantalogue; and the same tie that exacts faithfulness from me demands it of you.

Doc.—Well, what are you complaining about now?

Mir.—Would you dare to say to my face that you are not in love with Lucinda?

Doc.—The thesis is not so difficult to uphold: I am a philosopher, and, moreover, your husband; Mirto, here's a perfect demonstration that I am not Lucinda's lover.

Mir.—Oh, drop those big words; this isn't a question of thesis or demonstrations; this concerns a young girl, and pretty, to boot, to whom I mean to keep you from demonstrating too much. Just answer me one thing: Isn't it true that since Lucinda's father, when dying, confided his daughter to you, you have taken particular care of her?

Doc.—I admit it.

Mir.—And these books from which I cannot tear you away, you leave cheerfully to entertain her?

Doc.—Well, what of it?

Mir.—She's young?

Doc.—Not quite fifteen.

Mir.—Very pretty?

Doc.—Yes, very.

Mir.—Oh, when one wishes to philosophize only, he don't seek such pretty pupils, and what need has she of all your old philosophers, anyway? The sweet, young thing!

Doc.—What epithets is your jealousy going to waste so prodigally? Far from feeling for Lucinda the feebleness you suspect, I have endeavored simply to justify the confidence the father of this young lady reposed in me. An affair of honor compelled him to leave his native land, France, and to take refuge in Italy. It was his dying wish that I should undertake the education of his daughter. I lead her each day in the paths of wisdom. I furnish for her heart the antidote to love; I form her manners decorously; in a word, I undertake to make of her a woman strong——

Mir.—Say feeble, sir; feeble, of course, for you alone. If you wished nothing else than to give her a taste of wisdom, why should you place her elsewhere than in my home? Why put her with that pretended astrologer? The example of a woman as virtuous as I am, wouldn't it avail more than all your lessons?

Doc.—But, you know that I have several young disciples, who come here to study the humanities; should they see her,

their attention would be distracted from their tasks, and they, perhaps, might prove a pitfall for her.

Mir.—What's that? Not to mince matters, then, I am not capable, in your opinion, of making an impression upon the heart of your disciples? Nor do you care what effect they have on mine. The Doctor Pantalogue is a fine husband, indeed. Let his disciples cajole his wife, let his wife flirt wth his disciples; what cares he, provided he can make sure of the beautiful female scholar! I know not what restrains me; I ought to bill and coo with your whole academy to get square; you deserve it.

Doc.—What a grand idea of revenge! You'd doubtless bill and too marvellously, and I—but it strikes me your virtues offer you charming counsel!

Mir.—Fie! shame on you—in your old age,—the Doctor Pantalogue, Director of the Academy of Padua, has mistresses in town! I should very much like to see you with your Lucinda, to see your eyes, worn hollow by a lot of trashy old books, beam tenderly on her. And your voice, grown harsh in schools, does it tinkle mellowly with a tender jargon? How does your mouth, open so wide at times to pronounce the big words of your philosophers, pucker down to the word love? Do you gently stroke your gray beard with the white hand of your beautiful scholar? Do you point with magisterial finger to the necessity of her falling in love with you, or do you adopt the indifferent but giddy air of the presumptuous young dude? Do you dance or warble for her? Perhaps you whistle; how pleasant to see your face, so wrinkled already, when puckered for whistling.

Doc.—(Aside.) There's Celio coming. Ah! I must be careful that he, one of love's favorites, does not become acquainted with Lucinda. (To Mirto.) Let's drop the subject, madam.

Mir.—No, sir; I want your dear, your favorite scholar Celio to know——

Doc.—Wife, I beg you——

Enter Celio and Harlequin.

Mirto.—Oh, he'll learn——

Doctor.—Do me the kindness——

Mir.—It's quite useless.

Celio.—What seems to be the trouble between you two?

Mir.—(To Celio.) Would you believe——

Doc.—Forbear, Mirto——

Mir.—You fear he'll discover your treasure, don't you? And I feel that it's to my interest that he should both discover and take her away.

Harlequin.—The husband interrupts the wife, the wife the husband; that's a fair picture of the households of to-day, harum-scarum, everything going at sixes and sevens.

Mir.—(Rudely pulling Celio toward her.) Would you ever have thought that Doctor Pantalogue——

Doc.—(Pulling Celio toward himself.) Don't listen to her fairy tales; jealously darkens her brain. (Mirto and the doctor both speak at once, each tugging at Celio.)

Mir.—Doctor Pantalogue——

Doc.—With this philosophy——

Mir.—Has a young girl——

Doc.—That I have embraced——

Mir.—Very pretty, that every day——

Doc.—And these lessons——

Mir.—He goes to see——

Doc.—That I give in the academy——

Cel.—(Breaking loose.) What nonsense; heavens! have you made a compact to tear me apart?

Har.—This is a masterpiece: the Doctor Pantalogue has embraced a very pretty young girl in the academy; now, I'm not as great a philosopher as he, but I really think I could have done as much myself; it doesn't need many lessons nor much of an academy for that.

Cel.—Harlequin's head's level.

Mir.—(Again drawing Celio toward her.) But you don't seem to understand me; it's——

Doc.—(Drawing Celio toward himself.) He does well not to listen to you.

Har.—(Drawing the doctor to the back of the stage.) For

heaven's sake, don't both speak at once, all the time. Honor the fair sex, sir; you can speak afterward.

Mir.—(To Celio. Harlequin wrestles with the Doctor to prevent him interrupting her.) I want you to know that my rascally husband is unfaithful to me in favor of a young French woman, an orphan, who lodges over there. (She points to the astrologer's house.) He's desperately in love, and for her has sacrificed books, friends, disciples and his wife. I put myself last, having always been last in his thought.

Cel.—(Laughing.) Is she pretty?

Mir.—Pretty as a picture, charming. There's the house; come around to-morrow, I want you to see her and to make her love you, so that you can supplant my traitor. Good-bye, Pantalogue, I feel quite tranquil now.

Doc.—(Pulling loose from Harlequin.) That's fine employment for you, my wife!

Har.—(Running after Mirto, who is leaving.) You must not encroach, madam, if you please, upon my particular duty, that of procuring for my master the acquaintance of charming women. (Coming toward the front of the stage.) O Pantalogue, Pantalogue! your name little befits love!

Cel.—So this is the way you impose upon us, is it? Under this austere exterior, this humble habit, you conceal a tender heart.

Doc.—You credit my wife's fairy tales?

Har.—Love is a little libertine who is at home everywhere; he merely gambols about in a cottage, but becomes a serious, settled guest in these old ruined chateaux.

Cel.—My dear master, I do not blame you in the least for falling in love. Passion for passion, love throws philosophy in the shade; but the object of your tender care, is she really so beautiful as Mirto says?

Doc.—Of what consequence is her beauty to me? What connection can there be between this perishable quality and my heart, defended by the buttresses of philosophy?

Har.—(Jumping, with his feet joined.) Oh! the buttresses of philosophy; why, love could jump them like this without half trying.

Cel.—You cannot persuade me that you can see and talk, whole hours at a time, to a pretty girl without her making an impression on your heart. When her beautiful eyes regard you attentively, when her mouth graciously opens to answer, I feel sure that your mind is not fixed on those great lines that encircle the sky.

Doc.—They are, however, the ordinary subject of our discourse.

Har.—You may be talking of all those fine things, but your mind is elsewhere, just as while I eat, I often talk of great affairs of state, but my true attention is invariably fixed on the food and drink served.

Doc.—The noble comparison of a veritable glutton!

Cel.—The comparison is homely, but, I think, just. Your mouth pronounces, it is true, the great vague words of philosophy, but your mind, unconsciously, perhaps, roguishly trifles with the smiles and graces of your lovely scholar; your eyes inform your heart to desire; your heart deceives your imagination and fills it with a fire you falsely attribute to zeal for philosophy. I am extremely desirous of becoming acquainted with this pretty creature—won't you present me?

Doc.—Certainly not.

Cel.—(Low, to Harlequin.) Harlequin, you must find some method to satisfy my curiosity. (To the doctor.) You do not wish me to see her—you are jealous. (Embracing him.) But love, love, my dear master; nothing is sweeter. Is it not more natural to be disturbed by two bright eyes turned favorably on us or on our rival than whether the earth turns round the sun or this brilliant orb round the earth. What matters it when a comet or eclipse arrives? It is the absence of the loved one that alarms us. Why such fatigue to learn how it happens that the magnet attracts steel? The secret to attract hearts should be the sole object of our study. But I tire of preaching. If you will deign to follow me, my dear master, to the girl's house where I am going, I will endeavor to teach by example. (Low, to Harlequin.) Remember, you must think out some plan to introduce me to the young lady.

Doc.—A fine proposition to make a fellow of the university share with a dude and a coquette!

Har.—We've no need of a third party in the matter we wish to bring about; and now to work to set you entirely aside, O Pantalogue, O Pantalogue. (Celio and Harlequin leave.)

Doc.—(Alone, soliloquizing.) I must not let Lucinda become acquainted with so good-looking a youth as Celio. The sight of him in an instant would choke all the seeds of philosophy that I have sown in her young breast. I received her in my arms when she was barely born, and, having had her raised in the house of that old maid, the astrologer, she has never seen any man but me. Should Celio see her, his first admiring glance would make her suspect the existence of charms which strike and enchain; she would question these charms and unceasingly recall Celio to her mind's eye; probably she would endeavor to increase them by extraneous ornament, and this care would soon become of more import to her than the cultivation of her mind and soul. Like many another woman, soon, too, would she say: I wish only a mirror to reflect my beauty and a true love to feel my charms; to the curious I abandon all the rest of the universe. (He hears a key creaking in a lock and turns around.) But someone is opening the garden gate of the astrologer's house—the gate that I particularly forbade to be opened. Just heaven! I believe it is herself—Lucinda, where are you going?

Enter Lucinda, in a deep reverie; startled by the doctor's words, she looks up surprised.

Lucinda.—Where am I going? I'm sure I don't know—how should I? But, are you the only man in the world? For I see only you when now, for the first time, I get out of that inclosure where I have been kept so long.

Doctor.—(Aside.) What a question! How bothersome! (To Lucinda, who has again fallen into a deep reverie.) You are deep in thought, Lucinda; truly, most auspicious for our dear philosophy.

Luc.—(Somewhat vexed.) Philosophy has no share in my present thoughts. Since early morn two birds on one branch have been constantly together. They nestled side by side, then the trill of one responded to the carol of the other, and

even the silence that followed expressed a tender solicitude. I frankly admit that their song, their actions and that oblivion to the rest of nature which the pleasure of being together caused, made me thrill with an emotion—a confusion of ideas. Ah, but they are happy!

Doc.—These flowers which deck your hair are doubtless due to the charming commentary your fancy has supplied on the birds' happiness.

Luc.—The sweet reverie into which their tender union plunged me led my steps to a quiet pool in that brook which babbles at the foot of the garden; there I saw my features and gathered these flowers which I presented to myself, nor could I help but fancy that had they been offered by someone else it would have been in terms so charming that I must have felt touched by the tender attention.

Doc.—(Aside.) Nature, O Nature! I fear, in spite of all my efforts, you conquer! (To Lucinda.) And what attentions would you have paid you?

Luc.—Well—I can imagine better than I can define: a marked preference to be with me rather than another; a certain eagerness to find occasions to speak with me—somewhat timidly, of course—and this young man——

Doc.—(Brusquely breaking in.) What, this young man? And why, if you please, a young man rather than a young woman?

Luc.—Ah, you ask surprising questions—why this young man? Because in my own sex, you know it quite as well as I, I would find only rivals to my beauty, while the opposite is made to appreciate.

Doc.—I can no longer doubt. You wish to kindle in the hearts of men a consuming fire that often leads to the greatest crime. You are lost to shame, I abandon you.

Luc.—Don't get angry. It is not in you at all that I wish to inspire love; to you I give the entire disposal of my mind, continue to enrich it with the fruits of knowledge; but I have a heart, also, which, like the mind, has its curiosity, keen, pressing and even more interesting, I think—I need someone to enlighten it: at evening you shall minister to my mind and——

Doc.—(Nettled.) I understand, this "someone" every morning shall minister to your heart. Have you already sought out this new, this morning master?

Luc.—(In a discreet tone.) Oh, no; in fact, it would not be proper, I think, for me to do that; on the contrary, I should appear at first unwilling to listen, but—little by little——

Doc.—And this is how you have profited by my philosophical discourse? You might have been a rational woman if——

Luc.—In my opinion, an amiable woman is of more credit to her sex.

Doc.—I should have made you an example to women.

Luc.—I would rather amuse myself by imitating others than to weary myself with the desire to be an example; one, moreover, that none would follow.

Doc.—Your heart would have been immovable to the attacks of passion——

Luc.—Oh! to be happy, it seems to me, some passion is necessary. Do you think me yet so much a child that I do not realize my chief source of ennui is the indifference I feel to all that surrounds me; confined always to the same objects, with little pleasure or aversion, I have seen only you, the old maid astrologer, Urgantia, and the trees, flowers and brook of the garden. Yet the brook talks to me at times, and the birds have said, this morning: we are made one for the other, to mutually inspire each other; I shall please and be pleased, shall attract and be attracted; I shall have desires which will please for the moment even if they prove deceptive in the end.

Doc.—(Aside.) Each word she pronounces increases my pain. (Aloud.) Leave me.

Luc.—Very well, I shall go to find my birds; they will not scold me.

Doc.—(Scornfully.) Put them in a cage, then you will have them always near you.

Luc.—No, indeed I shall not, the charming little birds! Compelled by cruel restraint to remain together, I fear they might lose the enjoyment they now feel in each other's society. I know how cruel it is to be deprived of liberty. (She leaves.)

Doc.—(Alone.) You have, indeed, deceived yourself, Pantalogue; you thought there was nothing dangerous for a young beauty save intercourse with men, but two birds and a brook have developed in Lucinda all the weakness of her sex—weakness that I had flattered myself I had destroyed by philosophy. Pantalogue, you have deluded yourself well, and here she is, with a mind entirely occupied with a desire to please and to love. What disgust she shows for solitude, and, alas! for philosophy; what indifference to a master who loves her as if she were his own and only child. Ah! cursed birds! cursed brook!

Enter Urgantia

Urgantia.—What's the trouble, Doctor Pantalogue? You appear very much affected.

Doctor.—Alas! learned Urgantia, I am disheartened; would you believe that in spite of the pains I have taken to root out the womanly weakness in Lucinda, all my precepts of wisdom have become quite useless. Her mind is fixed on love, her heart, filled with desire, awaits only an object to fasten upon.

Urg.—An enlightened philosopher like yourself should not have thought, for an instant, that he could conquer nature, or turn a young woman from a desire to please, inspired by self-love. From this desire to please there soon comes the idea of a lover, while to her lively imagination the entire universe suggests love. The butterfly which flutters about a flower, leaving and returning many times, pictures to her mind the anxious lover who cannot leave his sweet one. The earth is adorned in springtime and summer with flowers, in consequence of the kiss of the sun, while the fruit it bears in autumn is born of the union with this brilliant orb; and winter itself is but a perfect symbol of the harsh rigor felt in the absence of the beloved. The studious philosopher admires the omnipotence of the Creator, but the tender girl the power of the created to love.

Doc.—Yes, but as Lucinda has, at most, only a theoretical knowledge of this power, I shall surely be able to keep her from its practice. Can it be possible that a callow youth in a quarter of an hour's conversation can destroy a philosophical

education that a philosopher like myself has inculcated during ten years?

Urg.—Ah! but the art and science that this callow youth would teach is much easier to learn than philosophy.

Doc.—But you must watch more carefully than ever, Urgantia; and it strikes me it would be an excellent idea, to keep Lucinda from the eyes of the inquisitive and from their schemes, for you to pass as her and to respond in her name to any compliments addressed to her. (Aside.) If I can get them to believe that this is Lucinda, when they have once seen her they will not ask to return.

Urg.—(Conceitedly.) You think, then, that I shall be taken for this young girl?

Doc.—We alone know her. My wife, even, who speaks of Lucinda so often, has never seen her, and her fame for beauty is due entirely to my wife's jealousy.

Urg.—I will do all in my power to help you.

Doc.—But night is near at hand, good-bye. Remember, I rely on you. It is time I returned to the academy. (He leaves.)

Urg.—(Alone.) The Doctor Pantalogue, if I am not mistaken, is himself smitten with the tender passion he condemns in his pupil: all his philosophy could not save him. As for myself, susceptible like others to the flame of love, I am naturally inclined to excuse the tender weakness. Sometimes, when occupied with watching the course of star and planet, my heart would bring me back to earth. Women are better suited to sentiment than to science. However, I pardon Pantalogue less than Lucinda——

Enter Celio and Harlequin.

Celio.—I think I heard you, madam, pronounce the name of Lucinda. I have just arrived from France, where both she and I were born; her relatives have charged me to see her, and if by your kindness I can tell her the thousand or more things I have to relate I shall be deeply obliged to you.

Harlequin.—His trip has browned him up somewhat, but his complexion will clear little by little.

Urgantia.—It will be easy to execute your commission; you see Lucinda before you. (Celio and Harlequin look around for Lucinda, but, finding no one, return and face Urgantia.)

Cel.—Where the deuce is she?

Urg.—I am she, I tell you.

Cel.—What, it's you, you the pupil of Doctor Pantalogue?

Har.—It's you he sweats over to make sage?

Urg.—Myself; but why this surprise?

Har.—But—I am surprised at his superfluous pains; what does he fear? Oh! I'll pledge myself you're sage, very sage, one couldn't be sager; you have the air of the whole seven sages of Greece.

Cel.—(Aside.) Heavens, but she's homely!

Urg.—(Aside, regarding Celio.) What a handsome fellow!

Har.—(To Celio.) She regards you favorably, sir; I will retire, you can chat with her more at your ease when alone.

Cel.—Where are you going?

Har.—(To Celio.) Go closer to her, sir; here's a chance to sow your wild oats; an opportunity such as this does not often occur, sir.

Urg.—(Sweetly, with the air of a person seeking to please.) You said, just now, you had a thousand things to entertain me with, and yet you say nothing.

Cel.—(Embarrassed.) Madam, pardon me, I did not expect to find Lucinda so quickly, and I find myself so confused and embarrassed that I can hardly recall—— (Low, to Harlequin.) Speak for me, you rascal.

Har.—(To Celio.) By Jove! such a face don't recall any more to me than it does to you; I can tell her, however, if you like, that you love her.

Cel.—(Stopping him.) Not that, for heaven's sake! (To Urgantia.) Excuse us, madam, we'll return to-morrow. (He wishes to leave.)

Urg.—(Aside, regarding Celio.) I must retain him; what a fascinating fellow he is! (To Celio, whom she recalls.) I, perhaps, can fancy what causes your surprise; you have heard me highly spoken of, and these eulogies have led you to be-

lieve me different in appearance; but, pardon my saying, that this is not my sole charm. I owe my reputation and the friendship of Doctor Pantalogue to a science infinitely more weighty than mere beauty. I have almost no intercourse with any save the gods; the sky is my country, the stars are my mirrors and my books; I am the confidant of destiny; the future is as present to my eye as the past; I know all that must happen to men; I can announce war or peace, and I see at a glance the rise and fall of empires.

Har.—(To Celio.) Ah! sir, that's a lady-love worth having! She must be a gypsy. By Jove! if we haven't struck good fortune in love, we can at least have our fortunes told. (To Urgantia.) Do you chance to know the Seigneur Celio? He's an intimate friend of my master; can you tell us where he is at present?

Urg.—I have never seen him, but at the request of Doctor Pantalogue, who gave me the hour of his birth, I have cast his horoscope. I know all that he does, all that he says and everything that he thinks, just as he does himself.

Cel.—(Aside.) She piques my curiosity. (Aloud.) Will you do me the kindness to tell me what he is doing at this moment?

Urg.—(Tenderly.) Your physiognomy pleases me. I could refuse you nothing, sir; but you must at least promise to be discreet. (She draws a tablet from her pocket and traces upon it various mysterious signs.) The Seigneur Celio is keeping an appointment with a pretty woman who loves him and whom he loves very much.

Cel.—(Laughing.) Whom he loves very much?

Har.—(Laughing.) A pretty woman?

Urg.—Very pretty. She is a blonde who has all the piquancy usually found only in brunettes.

Har.—(Looking laughingly at his master and slyly pointing to Urgantia.) The charming blonde!

Urg.—If you could see, as I see, the passionate glances he throws upon her!

Har.—Oh! I see them, I see them.

Urg.—The eagerness of her lover causes in this beauty an emotion which paints her cheeks a lovely carnation.

Cel.—(Aside.) I can't stand this any longer. (To Urgantia.) I must go to congratulate Celio upon his great good fortune. (He leaves.)

Har.—(Aside.) Astrologers, it seems, often deceive themselves; still, they must hit it sometimes, otherwise people would not be so infatuated with them; perhaps she can give me some better pointers than she gave my master. (To Urgantia.) Here's my hand, what do the stars think of a fellow like me?

Urg.—(Aside.) I must learn of this booby the name of that charming Frenchman who has made such an impression on my heart. (To Harlequin, sighing.) I cannot tell your fate until I know the name of your master.

Har.—And why, if you please?

Urg.—Why? Well, you know the star of the master has an influence upon the destiny of the valet, and there's truth in the proverb: "Like master, like servant."

Har.—You ought to know—suppose I serve the Seigneur Celio?

Urg.—(Aside.) Celio? Celio? Why, that must be he disguised as the Frenchman. I'll win the favor of this servant in my interest. (She pronounces some long, mysterious words while holding and looking at the hand of Harlequin; he withdraws it tremblingly.)

Har.—What the deuce are you muttering? You make me feel queer.

Urg.—(Again taking his hand.) You were born under a most happy constellation, for rapid fortune.

Har.—And that is?

Urg.—The one dominated by the planet Mercury.

Har.—So? My master has often obliged me to do honor to my planet.

Urg.—(Aside.) I'll flatter him with fine promises. (To Harlequin, looking at the lines in his hand.) Your cellar will be filled to overflowing with exquisite wines, your table will groan with delicious foods.

Har.—(Jumps with joy.) Good! good! fine eating and drinking! I'm well satisfied with the stars; but look, look sharp at this other hand and see if you cannot find a young and pretty girl, one made expressly for me, there, you understand——

Urg.—(Taking his other hand.) Yes, I see her—but——

Har.—What?

Urg.—These blessings cannot be bestowed upon you, unless Celio loves me.

Har.—(Surprised.) Unless Celio loves you? (Half crying.) Good-bye, blessings! (Aside.) My master will certainly never love that witch.

Urg.—But, by frequently talking of me, you can probably incline him to——

Har.—(Aside.) Kick me all over the place.

Urg.—Return my tenderness.

Har.—The stars, I understand, don't always keep their promises in full; can't you arrange to get me an instalment on the blessing account in advance—a sort of earnest of the stars' good intentions toward me?

Urg.—Nothing easier, sir; wait, I'll be back in a moment or two. (She leaves.)

Har.—(Alone.) If the stars do well by me in advance, I'll yield myself completely to them, and my master will have to love this Lucinda or tell me the reason why. It's true, the first glance at her is not very appetizing, but he'll get used, little by little, to her peculiar style of beauty; why, I'm sure I already find her less homely, since she has promised me these blessings. Besides, is it fair that only beauty should be loved? It strikes me the stars make me wait considerably, but I suppose it's quite a trip between the stars and the earth.

Enter Urgantia.

Urg.—Take this, my faithful fellow, this money and this wine as a pledge of things promised. Give this note to your master, and if I receive a favorable answer, you can count upon fortune smiling on you.

Har.—For a gypsy, I certainly find you an honest woman; I shall take great pleasure in immediately drinking to your good health.

Urg.—Do not tarry; deliver my note at once and quickly bring me back an answer; I shall return here to get it. (She leaves.)

Har.—(Alone, drinking.) There's a taste about this wine of the stars that I like. (He drinks.) At least, he won't hate you, nor do I think he will be entirely indifferent to you. (He drinks.) In fact, he'll rather like you, or, perhaps, I'd better say, he'll love you. (He drinks.) Yes, he'll fairly worship you; never in his life has my master loved so passionately as he now loves you.

Enter Lucinda, unseen by Harlequin.

Harlequin.—(Holding in his hand and looking at the money Urgantia gave him.) Charming astrologer, who could resist so many attractions! (He counts his money.)

Lucinda.—(Aside.) I saw the young man who asked to see me; how handsome he is! I heard, too, all his conversation with Urgantia; how base she is! Not satisfied with hiding me from the world, she now wishes an indiscreet and homely woman to pose as me. I must try to block her scheme and turn it to my own advantage.

Har.—(Perceiving Lucinda.) What a pretty girl! (Approaching her.) Would you kindly permit me, my pretty damsel, to ask if you are the young beauty that the stars and Lucinda have just promised me?

Luc.—I, myself, am Lucinda.

Har.—(Retreating and trembling.) You are Lucinda? There's some devilish witchcraft here. You can change, in a moment, your face and whole appearance? And what a change! My, but you're clever! A lady's maid with your talents could make millions.

Luc.—(Aside.) Without entirely undeceiving him, I'll use him for my purpose.

Har.—(Somewhat reassured.) What pleasure do you find

in being homely? You look a hundred times better now, and I'm not surprised that the doctor's wife is jealous of you.

Luc.—What! a woman is jealous of me? How flattering! I knew the brook spoke truth to me this morning.

Har.—(Aside.) Her amiability makes me bold. I wonder if the wine she gave me was dyed like her cheeks are? But what do I care; it was good, and I doubt not that my master would be quite reconciled to her at present, even if her complexion is artificial. (He embraces her.) Oh! it's only to see if the colors will wash! (He continues to caress and she to repulse him.) Now, I'm doing this strictly for your benefit, so you can get accustomed to my master's ways.

Luc.—Stop it, I tell you, you insolent fellow,

Har.—That's the way in this world! When you were homely you were willing enough to be embraced, but now you're beautiful you wish to shy off and put on airs; but Celio left you brusquely enough.

Luc.—I owe him thanks for not taking kindly to Lucinda, in that disagreeable disguise. I wish him to see her in the future in no form other than the one in which I now appear; nor can I pardon you for having promised the homely one to make him love her. Your master is under little obligations to you for that.

Har.—Let him see you as you are now, I warrant he'll love you hard enough. I'll go and seek him, but for heaven's sake don't change yourself meanwhile. (He leaves, but returns shortly afterward, in deep thought.)

Luc.—(Aside.) I'll revenge myself on Urgantia, my treacherous rival; quit an old philosopher for a young husband and drop philosophy for sentiment.

Har.—Excuse me, but my master will scarcely credit what I say; you help me out; you come with me.

Luc.—What an idea! Don't I merit his coming to seek me? However favorable my feelings for your master may be, I should never think of taking such a step.

Har.—(Aside.) I notice when she's homely she's not so devilish particular. But, that's the way; the more lovable they are the less they love you.

Luc.—No, I cannot go with you; it will be quite enough for you to hint to him my feelings, and then return and tell me what he answers. I shall await you in this garden; you can knock when you get back, but do not keep me waiting long, for I am curious to know how he receives your news. (She enters the garden and closes the door.)

Har.—I fear this new acquaintance is going to give me plenty to do.

Enter Celio.

Harlequin.—Ah! master, we meet quite apropos, for I have the best of news. In you I see the happiest of men, for Lucinda loves you.

Celio.—You joke poorly, Harlequin.

Har.—But I'm not joking, sir; Lucinda adores you and it's absolutely necessary that you return her passion; I've pledged my word upon it.

Cel.—Well, I don't intend to honor your pledge; I've little liking for the grotesque.

Har.—Grotesque, did you say? May the devil take me if she's not the most beautiful person—you'll love her to distraction, I tell you.

Cel.—Beautiful? Lucinda? that astrologer I saw awhile ago?

Har.—Not that one, the one I saw when you weren't here.

Cel.—You saw another and more beautiful Lucinda?

Har.—No, I didn't see another Lucinda; I saw the same one, who was homely while you were present, but who became beautiful a moment or two after you left. Here's a note she gave me to hand you.

Cel.—(After having read his letter.) And you say a beautiful girl gave you this charming letter for me?

Har.—No, she hadn't yet become beautiful when she gave me that letter, but her beauty came shortly afterward, and with it a prudish severity.

Cel.—I've no patience with you, Harlequin. First she's beautiful, then she isn't, and again she's beautiful. What nonsense is this, anyway?

Har.—Why, it's clear enough; only this astrologer must be something of a witch, for she changed her face and her whole appearance in an instant.

Cel.—Changed her face and whole appearance?

Har.—Yes; is there anything so astonishing in that? Don't we see women every day with a little paint and powder and human ingenuity transform their faces? And when astrology, magic and witchcraft combine——

Cel.—Changed her face and whole appearance. I suspect some deviltry. While Lucinda was homely she gave you this letter, you say; did she speak of me while beautiful?

Har.—Oh, yes; she said it pleased her to know you disdained Lucinda when homely, and that she wished you to see her always, in the future, beautiful—that you might feel different toward her.

Cel.—That's sufficient; I'll penetrate this mystery. I've been fooled by the doctor's precautions.

Har.—(Seeing Urgantia coming.) Ah! master, here she comes; speak to her yourself. I fear, however, she's returned to her original shape. Yes, alas! she's homely again.

Cel.—Tell her I adore her, and make an appointment for me somewhere in the flower-garden. (Aside.) I must get rid of this ugly creature, so that I can speak without interruption to the beauty. (He leaves.)

Enter Urgantia.

Urgantia.—Well, my dear fellow, did you give him my note and return with an answer?

Harlequin.—An answer? Not much. My master takes time by the forelock; he goes straight to the point. He awaits you in the flower-garden, at the lane of sighs, to tell you with his lips more than he could put on paper. But, take my advice, become beautiful; he'll be more likely to content you.

Urg.—A rendezvous is the response to my note? (With assumed timidity.) But it seems that a modest girl like I am——

Har.—By Jove, if you're going to spring your modesty on

us, you ought not to employ for your love negotiations a man born under the planet Mercury.

Urg.—To find myself alone in a garden with a young man at nightfall, this idea is——

Har.—A very pleasing one, I'm sure. Now, don't be too kittenish, and, above all, don't forget to change over to that pretty face and figure, for your present features are not at all adapted to a rendezvous.

Urg.—(Simpering.) It's true that timidity and modesty make very great changes——

Har.—(Leading her toward the garden.) Come, you're losing time; slip into the flower-garden, you'll find someone worth talking to.

Urg.—(At the garden gate.) O love! love! to what dangers do you now expose the tender Urgantia? (She leaves.)

Enter Celio, around the side of the house.

Celio.—I must clear up this mystery——

Harlequin.—(Stopping him.) Where the devil are you going? This isn't the way; go through there. Have I got to lead you around like a child?

Cel.—Leave me alone, I wish to——

Har.—You wish to get off the track and make her wait for you? She's in there, I say.

Cel.—Get out of my way; I feel sure that Lucinda the beauty and the homely Lucinda are two different persons, and I mean to assure myself definitely.

Har.—Well, you won't get any assurance here.

Enter Lucinda, after Celio has knocked on Urgantia's door.

Lucinda.—(Pretending at first to avoid Celio.) Seigneur, what have you come to find in this peaceful retreat?

Celio.—I come to make amends for my error at the expense of my liberty, and to seek a charming person whom I am destined to love all the balance of my life. What fascination you possess! Pray do not turn your face away.

Harlequin.—There is another one, thick-headed fool that I was! (Lucinda keeps looking around, as though she feared to be surprised with them.)

Cel.—(To Lucinda.) I beg you, do not be disturbed; I have banished your Argus to a pretended rendezvous in the flower-garden, and Harlequin will now go to watch her. (He makes energetic signs to Harlequin to be off.)

Har.—Very well, sir; I go to observe my planet. (He leaves.)

Luc.—Are there not ladies enough, sir, in this city to occupy you? Must you, in addition, disturb my solitude?

Cel.—Ah! I leave them all joyfully. I prefer to all else the pleasure of passing my days in this solitude with you, here to bespeak my love and let my thirsty heart drink at the inexhaustible fountain of your bright eyes.

Luc.—(Aside.) Just like my birds! (To Celio.) I can scarce credit this preference; the ladies of the city have too many advantages over me. Unknown to Pantalogue, I have read some books in which these ladies are pictured: they have costumes of rich and rare materials in many hues and colors, while I am dressed most simply; precious jewels adorn their hair, while mine is decked alone with flowers. They have clever maids to aid, and all the resources of the chemist, while the tiny pool of a brook is my only mirror, and its sparkling water my only cosmetic. Attempts upon a thousand hearts have taught these ladies how to please, while I, alas! should I please, could not tell how I did it.

Cel.—This innocence of the value of your charms makes them all the more dangerous; the simplicity of your ornaments and manners sets off your radiant beauty. Truly, the conquest of all the greatest beauties in Padua would move me less than to know that I pleased you; and if I were assured you loved me——

Luc.—Please me, love and be loved by me. Ah! sir, that would, perhaps, be the greatest misfortune that could happen to me. Love, to the ladies of the world, so Pantalogue has told me, is only a diversion; doubtless to me it would be a serious occupation. My thoughts are not taken up, as theirs, with fashion and the play, gaming and intrigue, which en-

feeble all true sentiment. I cannot give my heart with faint hope of return, for nothing could console me for the loss of my lover. Shut up as I am, my mind and heart would be confined to the object of my love, and should this object prove inconstant, the same solitude that fed my love would increase my sorrow. Ah! those persons over whom Cupid is too masterful should carefully avoid him!

Cel.—Always sure of infinite return and a constancy beyond question, should you fear to love too much?

Luc.—No, I should not fear to love too much, once I had commenced; then I should be too frank to hide my feelings, but I wish to avoid beginning. However, I had not before noticed we were alone. Pray, leave me, sir; be kind and go at once.

Cel.—Do you doubt the respect that must always accompany the love you inspire?

Luc.—This love and this respect I fear, sir; but what unusual terms, foreign to this place and to me, I have learned already to pronounce in your presence.

Cel.—These are words that flow naturally to the lips; how cruel in the doctor to bury these charms alive; Follow nature's promptings; she has favored you with beauty only that you may enjoy its fruits.

Luc.—The morality I have been taught up to this time is quite different. My mind received it with indifference, and there has remained only a light impression, while the thoughts you have expressed are deeply engraved upon my heart—speaking of my heart, I feel embarrassed—I feel so much moved, I hardly know what I am saying—but, sir, the daylight has entirely vanished, I can scarce see; leave me, I beg you. (She starts toward the house.)

Enter the doctor, who stops her.

Celio.—(Searching in the obscurity for Lucinda.) You flee to conceal yourself in vain; if my eyes cannot find your hiding-place, my heart will inform me. (Celio continues to search for her.)

Lucinda.—(To Pantalogue, whom she believes to be Celio.)

I forbid you to retain me longer. By this resistance to my wish you are destroying the favorable opinion that your words and appearance inspired. Yes, Seigneur, I admit, and the constraint under which you have placed me will excuse this sudden avowal, that I am pleased with the interest you take in me, and I sincerely hope you will be able to find some way to get me out of the clutches of Doctor Pantalogue, Urgantia and the philosophy, which will henceforth be more disgusting than ever to me.

Doctor.—(Aside.) What do I hear!

Cel.—Where could she have gone?

Enter Urgantia.

Urgantia.—(Aside.) I recognize Celio's voice. (Aloud.) He has forgotten the flower-garden.

Celio.—(He catches Urgantia, who, he thinks, is Lucinda, and kneels before her.) Do not speak, charming Lucinda, of any woman but yourself. I am already severely punished, for did I not take for you that silly old maid astrologer?

Enter Mirto and Harlequin, with a lighted torch.

Mirto.—Great heavens! what do I see?

Harlequin.—(Somewhat blinded by the light, to Mirto.) Yes, I can assure you, madam, that you will be most content with the manner my master and I have conducted this enterprise for you.

Mir.—(To Harlequin.) Look there, you gallows-bird, and see how your master follows my suggestions and makes Lucinda love him, to supplant my husband. (To Celio.) Fie! sir, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, to so help the intrigues of a married man; but perhaps you fear that this maker of almanacs will be lonesome while my unfaithful husband is caressing. (She points to Lucinda, who is held in the arms of the doctor.)

Celio.—(Placing himself by the side of Lucinda.) 'Tis but a mistake due to the night, madam. I beg, no hard words, and caution you to respect a lady with whom I am ready to

unite my destiny, if she thinks the pleasure of loving me preferable to the wearisome tasks of philosophy.

Doctor.—(To Celio.) What, you wish to marry her?

Mir.—By heavens! it won't be healthy for you to oppose it.

Doc.—But, Lucinda, will she be willing to leave the noble exercise of mind and soul afforded by philosophy for the sordid cares and trifling interests of a household?

Mir.—It would be much more to your credit to try satisfactorily to fulfill some of the duties you owe your family than to seek to restrain others. What good does your old philosophy do me?

Lucinda.—I should not merit the honor Celio wishes to bestow on me were I to hesitate a minute.

Har.—You are quite right, Miss, there's nothing like applying one's self to natural philosophy.

Luc.—(To the doctor.) Pantalogue, you have instructed both Celio and me, and we hope you will show the same kindness——

Har.—To their children.

Doc.—Faugh! (He leaves.)

Har.—The poor old philosopher, he was choking! (To Urgantia.) And what do the stars think of it?

Urgantia.—(She looks at them furiously, then bursts out with prophetic rage.) Audacious lovers and most daring mates, you have raised high heaven against you. Over your hymeneal altar I see the planets, and the celestial signs prefigure their malignant influence. Saturn will soon cast over you his sombre vapors to darken your minds and impede your love, while Mars, happy to increase these gathering clouds, frowns portentously. (To Lucinda.) Lucinda, Aquarius, the minister of destiny, will make your bosom ice for Celio, while fate shall place upon his forehead the sad horns of Capricorn.

Mir.—What predictions!

Har.—In truth, this is the horoscope of nearly all husbands; and, if all applaud whom the shoe pinches, the house will be shaken by the noise.

As appears from its Pantalogue, Harlequin and other characters, *The Philosopher Duped by Love* was taken, in part, from the Spanish drama. Though presented at the Bourgogne about the same time with Molière's comedies, it differs widely from them in tone, differs both in characterization and manners. In the philosopher and his wife, his male disciple and his female pupil, even in Urgantia, the old-maid astrologer, there is much to remind us of the heavy father, the dama, gracioso and other personages of the Spanish drama in its lighter vein. Nor should this detract from the merit of the work; for at the time when it was written the literature of Spain was all-powerful in Europe, so that Molière and Racine, and even Shakespeare, did not scruple to borrow from her writers. Not yet had the French stage reached the summit of its glory, and the company which Molière founded must compete with foreign players and playwrights for the suffrages of audiences, then all too few and scant to reward the productions of genius.

Raise my body; place my head upright. I am faint in the joints of my body, my friends; lay hold of my fair-formed hands, O attendants. The dressing on my head is heavy for me to support; take it off.

PHÈDRE,—RACINE.

PHÈDRE

After an original painting by Alexander Cabanel

French Drama

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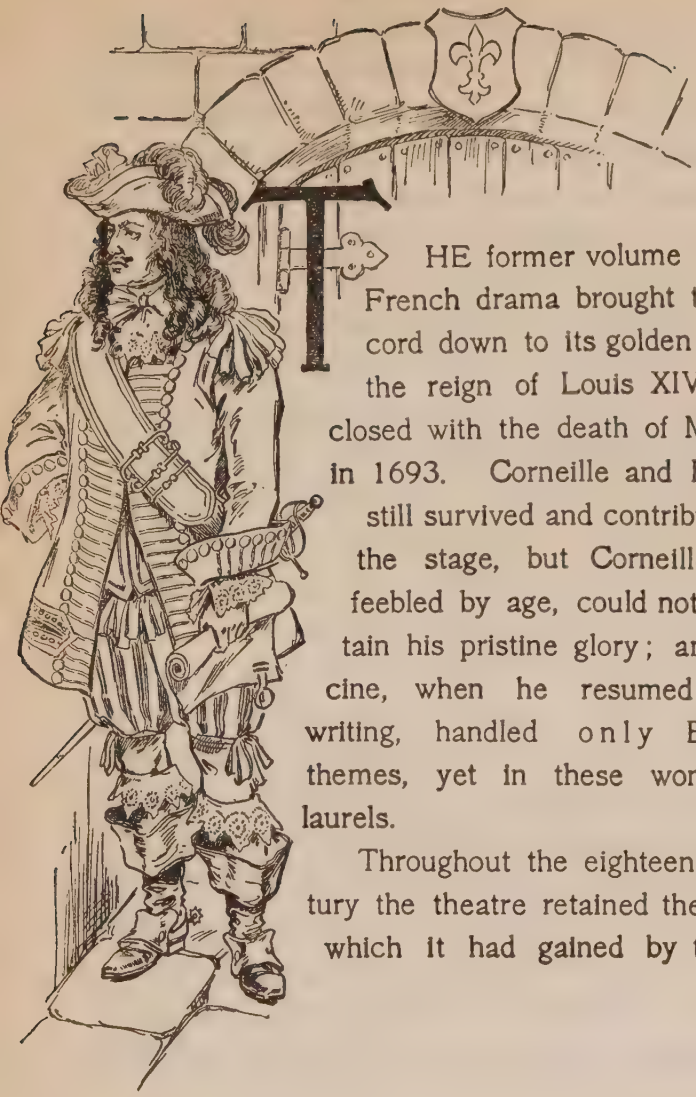
Prologue



THE former volume on the French drama brought the record down to its golden age in the reign of Louis XIV., and closed with the death of Molière in 1693. Corneille and Racine still survived and contributed to the stage, but Corneille, enfeebled by age, could not maintain his pristine glory; and Racine, when he resumed playwriting, handled only Biblical themes, yet in these won new laurels.

Throughout the eighteenth century the theatre retained the vogue which it had gained by the ex-

traordinary brilliancy of the golden age. But the choicest of the new productions, though hailed at the time as equal or superior to the standard classics, have sunk from that high esteem, and the most are utterly forgotten. In the drama, as in every department of literature in that age, the bustling activity and influence of Voltaire are conspicuous. Thrust into the Bastile for a youthful satire, he there composed the tragedy of *Œdipe*, whose immediate success in 1718 gave him eminence. This place he maintained by a series of fine poems and dramas, which caught public applause. Meanwhile, he scattered biting epigrams right and left, and acquired wealth by jobbery and speculation. His power was exerted to clear the stage of the insolent nobles who interfered with the actors. Among the reforms for which he claimed credit was the enlargement of the scope of the drama by taking themes from Asia as well as Europe, from the New World as well as the Old, and from the field of pure invention. Having spent three years of banishment in England, he had learned something of Shakespeare, whom he pronounced "an inspired barbarian," yet could

borrow his ideas, while condemning his lawless methods. After middle life Voltaire's genius turned more to science, philosophy, public affairs and the propaganda of free thought. Even his dramas became a medium of enforcing his personal opinions rather than a presentation of life.

There was always a strong party opposed to Voltaire's domination. Crébillon the elder was put forward as their dramatic champion. His best play was *Rhadamiste et Zenobie*, which appeared in 1711. His surname, "the terrible," was due to his endeavor to surpass his predecessors by inspiring terror.

In comedy Le Sage leads the way. Known the world over as the author of *Gil Blas*, he earned his bread by composing petty farces. But in a higher class he wrote *Turcaret*, satirizing swindling financiers, and *Crispin Rival de son Maître*, a piece worthy of Molière, which we give in full. The most notable successor of that master of comedy was J. F. Regnard, whose own life was full of romantic surprises. His best comedies were *Le Joueur* and *Le Légataire*.

Between the standard divisions of the drama two new branches were now proposed—*Tragédie*

bourgeoise and *Comédie larmoyante*—which were designed to present possible situations in real life hitherto excluded by the inflexible rules regarding the rank of heroes and the importance of events exhibited on the stage.

The most remarkable comedy of the period before the French revolution is the "*Figaro*" of Beaumarchais, music-master, speculator and dramatist. His *Barbier de Séville* came out in 1775, and the *Mariage de Figaro* in 1784. These revivals of the Spanish comedy of intrigue foreshadow the coming political overthrow. Their careless good humor and witty gayety have been accepted by the French as genuine characteristics of the nation.

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French Drama.

I.

Racine and His Opponents.

Racine, though highly esteemed by Louis XIV, had made enemies at court. His demeanor was usually marked by a cold and almost haughty reserve. His sarcastic wit had been too freely exercised not to inflict many ever-open wounds. His ingratitude toward the Solitaries of Port Royal had rendered him an object of dislike to more than one of their most uncompromising opponents. His triumphs in the theatre led the worshippers of Corneille to regard him in the light of something like a personal foe. Last, but not least, he continued to make steady progress in royal favor, and the most coveted dignities in the way of state employment might be within his reach. Nor did all the ill-feeling excited against him fail to take a tangible form. The duchesse de Bouillon, niece of Mazarin, and Madame Deshoulières, the "tenth Muse," organized a cabal to lower his prestige as a dramatist, with the purpose of lessening his influence at court and of wounding his ever-susceptible vanity.

It was at this moment that Pradon's *Pirame et Thisbé* appeared. Might not the fiat go forth that the author had at one bound attained the first place among living dramatists, Corneille alone excepted? Numerically strong, the cabal eagerly acted upon the suggestion. In and out of season, at Versailles and in Paris, it was declared that the genius of Racine had been overshadowed by that of Pradon. *Pirame et Thisbé* accordingly obtained a factitious celebrity, and the shabby poet from Rouen found himself the hero of the hour.

Iphigénie.

Racine was weak enough to show that his persecutors had cut him to the quick, but ere long their satisfaction was qualified by a very different feeling. While the cry against him was at its height, his *Iphigénie* appeared at the Bourgogne, with Champmêlé as the young Greek virgin. He had recast Euripides' noble tragedy in a new mould, deepening the interest at the expense of the essential spirit of the original, and discarding the traditional catastrophe. Iphigenia must be sacrificed at the altar before the breezes required to bear the Greek fleet from Aulis to the Phrygian shore will set in, but at the eleventh hour it is found that another princess of the name is the victim intended by the gods. This *Iphigénie* was superior to anything Racine had yet achieved. Even *Andromaque* does not exhibit so powerful a command over the springs of human sensibility as that with which he portrays the resignation of Iphigenia to her seemingly inevitable fate, the terrible an-

guish of Clytemnestra, and the strife of contending feelings in the heart of Agamemnon. Mdlle. Champmêlé's acting, too, was worthy of the play. Boileau wrote a tribute of which the poet's mistress may well have been proud, and Louis XIV, fresh from yet another war, had the tragedy represented before him in the orangery at Versailles.

Corneille's Last Work.

In the autumn of 1673 the long career of Corneille as a dramatist came to a final close. Boileau had recently completed his *Art Poétique*, wherein he formulated the principles underlying his criticism, and which, even more than the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, was accepted as a general "profession of literary faith." In one chant he pointedly referred to "The Corneille both of the *Cid* and of *Horatius*." The aged dramatist seems to have been much pained by the distinction thus drawn. He could not bring himself to admit the great difference between his earlier and later work. "Am I not always Corneille?" he almost plaintively asked. In this spirit —this disinclination to admit that his intellectual energies were declining—he proceeded to write another tragedy for the Bourgogne. The hero on whom his choice fell was the Parthian warrior Surenas. By undertaking this task, he exposed himself to severe mortification. Neither players nor audience approved his work, and the veteran retired deeply disappointed.

Corneille continued to live at his old home, and his uncouth but impressive figure was still a familiar object in the streets of Paris and at first representations of

noteworthy plays. It was a comparatively sorrowful old age that awaited the man who had spread the fame of the French drama throughout Europe. His wife, the Marie de Lamperière of Richelieu days, was in her grave; his third son, the pride of his declining years, had lost his life at the head of a party of cavalry at the siege of Graves; his younger daughter, Marguérite, had taken the veil. He could not but recognize that his once splendid career was closing in gloom and misfortune, and his pension, almost the only means of support now left to him, was neither adequate to his wants nor regularly paid. Under these circumstances, as may be supposed, his brusqueness of manner and speech, which had so long withstood the influence of Parisian society, became more pronounced than ever. But life had not yet lost all its charms for the broken-spirited poet. He received more than one proof that the authority acquired by the new school of tragedy did not prevent the growth of his own fame. Six of his best plays were represented at Versailles by royal command. He conceived a tender interest in his sister's son, Bernard Le Bouvier de Fontenelle, then only in his eighteenth year, but already noted for his studious habits and his sobriety of demeanor. Above all, Thomas Corneille and his wife resided under the same roof; and lapse of time served only to strengthen the ties between them.

Racine's Phèdre.

Meantime Racine was advancing to a new triumph, won after a singular dramatic contest. "In a conversa-

tion at Madame de la Fayette's," says the abbé de Saint Pierre, "M. Racine contended that it was in the power of a great poet to make the darkest crimes appear more or less excusable—nay, to arouse compassion for the criminals themselves. Even Medea and Phædra, he thought, might become objects of pity rather than horror upon the stage. His hearers, however, were inclined to dissent from this view, if not to turn it into ridicule." In order to convince them of their error, as well as to measure his strength once more against Euripides, the dramatist took the fierce passion of Phædra for her stepson as the subject of a tragedy. His intention soon became known in the salons; and his enemies, recovering from the depressing effect of the success of *Iphigénie*, again assumed a hostile attitude toward him. They urged their friend Pradon to tear away any laurels that might still rest on the brow of Racine by writing a *Phèdre* in competition with him. The suggestion was complacently adopted, and the keenest interest was aroused in the result of the impending duel.

In less than three months the two *Phèdres* were in a presentable shape, and Racine's tragedy was played first on January 2, 1674. An unwelcome surprise fell upon the company as the curtain arose. The theatre was half deserted. The malicious cabal had bought up all the best seats, only to leave them unoccupied. The dreary aspect of the house threw a chill over the few who were present, and the performance concluded almost in silence. When, two days afterward, Pradon's *Phèdre* was brought forward at the Guénégaud, the scene was very different. The hall presented a most enlivening

appearance. The cabal had repaired thither in full force, and any expression of disgust on the part of Racine's partisans was promptly drowned in roars of applause. These tactics were pursued at each theatre for the first six representations, at a cost of no less than 15,000 livres.

The cabal soon had the mortification to find that they had gone to infinite trouble and expense without accomplishing their purpose. Pradon's tragedy became an object of general contempt, Racine's of more enthusiastic admiration than any of his previous works. In each instance the verdict of the play-goers has been endorsed by succeeding ages. In *Phèdre* the genius of Racine probably reached its culminating point.

The scene of the *Phèdre* is laid at Trezene in the Peloponnesus. Theseus, king of Athens, has long been absent from his home. Hippolytus, his son by Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons, being now grown up, declares his intention of seeking his father, but his tutor, Theramenes, tries to dissuade him. Theramenes had himself travelled through many countries in such a search, but in vain; and he suspects that Theseus may not desire to return. Further he tells the youth that his stepmother, Phædra, who had shown such dislike to him at first that Theseus had banished him for a while, has evidently relented; besides, she is ill of a malady, the cause of which she conceals. Hippolytus then reveals a new reason for his departure. He confesses that he is in love with Aricia, the daughter of Pallas. But her fifty brothers had attempted to drive Theseus from his throne and had all been slain.

Furthermore Theseus had prohibited Aricia from ever marrying, lest her children might avenge the deaths of their uncles. Hippolytus, feeling the embarrassment of his position, thinks he must depart, and Theramenes consents, but advises him to be constant in his love for Aricia.

Phædra then appears on the stage, bewailing her misfortune. She attributes it to the hatred which Venus bears to the sun-god Apollo for disclosing her amours with Mars. Phædra, being a descendant of Apollo, has been inspired by the implacable goddess with an overpowering love for her stepson. In vain has the unfortunate queen struggled against this unholy passion; but fate is against her, and her only relief can be in death. She thus addresses the Sun as her ancestor:

Noble and glorious author of an unhappy race, thou whose daughter it was my mother's boast to be, perhaps thou dost blush to witness me in my shame. O Sun, I come for the last time to look on thee.

Œnone, Phædra's old nurse, is with her, and bewails the wretchedness of her mistress; for three days she has taken no food, for three nights she has had no sleep. She thus seeks to learn the cause of the trouble:

By what remorse are you thus tortured? What crime has brought on you so severe affliction? Your hands are not stained with innocent blood.

Phædra.—Thanks be to the gods, my hands are clean; would that my heart were as innocent!

Œnone.—What dreadful purpose, then, has been in your heart?

Phæ.—I have told enough. Spare me the rest.

Œnone persists in demanding an explanation. Alleging her long and faithful services, she beseeches her mistress to have confidence in her, and with tears continues her searching inquiries. At last the probe touches the malignant germ.

Œnone.—Are you in love?

Phædra.—I have in me all its fire and fury.

Œn.—For whom?

Phæ.—You are about to hear the crown of horror. I love; but I tremble and shudder at his name.

Œn.—Who is he?

Phæ.—You know the son of the Amazon, the prince whom I have so long oppressed.

Œn.—Hippolytus! Great gods!

Phæ.—It is thou that hast pronounced his name!

Phædra proceeds to relate that when she became the wife of Theseus her happiness seemed secure. But Athens revealed to her the enemy of her peace, who filled her soul with trouble. She recognized Venus as her persecutor and sought to appease her by building and adorning a temple, in which she daily offered sacrifice and burned incense. But while thus engaged, her heart constantly turned to Hippolytus, until she made Theseus banish his son. For a time she was relieved, but when Theseus brought her to Trezene, she saw Hippolytus again, and all her torment returned.

She feels that the passion is not true love, but the malicious power of Venus within her. She hates herself; she is filled with horror at her crime. She has confessed, not being able to resist Œnone's tears, but she implores the aged nurse not to overwhelm her with reproach, seeing that death is near.

Panope, a servant, then comes to announce the death of Theseus. The people of Athens are in tumult on the question of their allegiance. Who shall reign, the son of Phædra, or Hippolytus, or Aricia, the heiress of Pallas? The nurse gives strange counsel. She tells Phædra that, since Theseus is dead, her love for Hippolytus is no longer criminal and may be avowed. Otherwise he may lead the rebels against her. But if she wins him to her side, they may unite in opposing Aricia.

In the second act Aricia appears with her confidante, Ismene. She has heard of the haughty and cold disposition of Hippolytus and wonders that he should ask to see her. But Ismene assures her that the reserved youth betrays his love for her by unmistakable signs. Aricia can scarcely be convinced; she recalls her misfortunes, the slaughter of her brothers and the hatred of Theseus. Yet she admits that his beauty and grace have touched her heart, and she is proud of his love thus unwittingly acquired. It is, indeed, a singular triumph to have conquered a man considered invulnerable. Hippolytus appears and assures Aricia that he will revoke the harsh decrees which his father had made against her. He goes further, and declares that her title to the sovereignty of Athens is superior to

his own, since Egeus, the father of Theseus, was but the adopted son of Pandion, whose title has lawfully descended to her. He even offers to support her cause against Phædra and make her queen of Attica. But this extreme and unexpected offer awakens distrust. Then Hippolytus declares his love, and her heart is softened. She accepts his offer to raise her to an unlooked-for dignity, yet assures him that she prizes more highly his affection.

Hippolytus is then summoned to meet Phædra, who exclaims to Œnone, as he approaches:

> There I see him!
> My blood forgets to flow, my tongue to speak
> What I am come to say.
>
> *Œnone.*— Think of your son,
> How all his hopes depend on you.
>
> *Phædra.*— I hear
> You leave us and in haste. I come to add
> My tears to your distress, and for a son
> Plead my alarm. No more has he a father,
> And at no distant day my son must witness
> My death. Already do a thousand foes
> Threaten his youth. You only can defend him.
> But in my secret heart remorse awakes,
> And fear lest I have shut your ears against
> His cries. I tremble lest your righteous anger
> Visit on him ere long the hatred earned
> By me, his mother.
>
> *Hippolytus.*— No such base resentment,
> Madam, is mine.
>
> *Phæ.*— I could not blame you, prince,
> If you should hate me. I have injured you:
> So much you know, but could not read my heart.
> T' incur your enmity has been mine aim:
> The selfsame borders could not hold us both;

In public and in private I declared
Myself your foe, and found no peace till seas
Parted us from each other. I forbade
Your very name to be pronounced before me.
And yet if punishment should be proportioned
To the offense, if only hatred draws
Your hatred, never woman merited
More pity, less deserved your enmity.

Hipp.—A mother jealous of her children's rights
Seldom forgives the offspring of a wife
Who reigned before her. Harassing suspicions
Are common sequels of a second marriage.
Of me would any other have been jealous
No less than you, perhaps more violent.

Phæ.—Ah, prince, how Heaven has from the general law
Made me exempt, be that same Heaven witness!
Far different is the trouble that devours me!

Hipp.—This is no time for self-reproaches, madam.
It may be that your husband still beholds
The light, and Heaven may grant him safe return,
In answer to our prayers. His guardian god
Is Neptune, ne'er by him invoked in vain.

Phæ.—He who has seen the mansions of the dead
Returns not thence. Since to those gloomy shores
Theseus is gone, 'tis vain to hope that Heaven
May send him back. Prince, there is no release
From Acheron's greedy maw. And yet, methinks,
He lives and breathes in you. I see him still
Before me, and to him I seem to speak;
My heart—
Oh, I am mad! Do what I will,
I cannot hide my passion.

Hipp.— Yes, I see
The strange effects of love. Theseus, though dead,
Seems present to your eyes, for in your soul
There burns a constant flame.

Phæ.— Ah, yes, for Theseus
I languish and I long; not as the Shades
Have seen him, of a thousand different forms

The fickle lover, and of Pluto's bride
The would-be ravisher, but faithful, proud
E'en to a slight disdain, with youthful charms
Attracting every heart, as gods are painted,
Or like yourself. He had your mien, your eyes,
Spoke and could blush like you, when to the isle
Of Crete, my childhood's home, he crossed the waves,
Worthy to win the love of Minos' daughters.
What were you doing then? Why did he gather
The flower of Greece, and leave Hippolytus?
Oh, why were you too young to have embarked
On board the ship that brought thy sire to Crete?
At your hands would the monster then have perished,
Despite the windings of his vast retreat.
To guide your doubtful steps within the maze
My sister would have armed you with the clue.
But, no, therein would Phædra have forestalled her.
Love would have first inspired me with the thought
And I it would have been whose timely aid
Had taught you all the labyrinth's crooked ways.
What anxious care a life so dear had cost me!
No thread had satisfied your lover's fears:
I would myself have wished to lead the way,
And share the peril you were bound to face;
Phædra with you would have explored the maze,
With you emerged in safety or have perished.

Hipp.—Gods! What is this I hear? Have you forgotten
That Theseus is my father and your husband?

Phæ.—Why should you fancy I have lost remembrance
Thereof, and am regardless of mine honor?

Hipp.—Forgive me, madam. With a blush I own
That I misconstructed words of innocence.
For very shame I cannot bear your sight
Longer. I go—

Phæ.— Ah! cruel prince, too well
You understood me. I have said enough
To save you from mistake. I love. But think not
That at the moment when I love you most
I do not feel my guilt; no weak compliance

Has fed the poison that infects my brain.
The ill-starred object of celestial vengeance,
I am not so detestable to you
As to myself. The gods will bear me witness,
Who have within my veins kindled this fire;
The gods, who take a barbarous delight
In leading a poor mortal's heart astray.
Do you yourself recall to mind the past:
'Twas not enough for me to fly—I chased you
Out of the country, wishing to appear
Inhuman, odious; to resist you better,
I sought to make you hate me. All in vain!
Hating me more, I loved you none the less:
New charms were lent to you by your misfortunes.
I have been drowned in tears, and scorched by fire;
Your own eyes might convince you of the truth,
If for one moment you could look at me.
What is't I say? Think you this vile confession
That I have made is what I sought to utter?
Not daring to betray a son for whom
I trembled, 'twas to beg you not to hate him
I came. Weak purpose of a heart too full
Of love for you to speak of aught besides!
Take your revenge, punish my odious passion;
Prove yourself worthy of your valiant sire,
And rid the world of an offensive monster!
Does Theseus's widow dare to love his son?
The frightful monster! Let her not escape you!
Here is my heart. This is the place to strike.
Already prompt to expiate its guilt,
I feel it leap impatiently to meet
Your arm. Quick, give 't.

Œn.— What, madam, will you do?
Just gods! But some one comes. Go, fly from shame;
You cannot 'scape if seen by any thus.

Enter Theramenes.

Theramenes.—Is that the form of Phædra that I see
Hurried away? What mean these signs of sorrow?
Where is your sword? Why are you pale, confused?

Hippolytus.—Friend, let us fly. I am, indeed, confounded.
With horror and astonishment extreme.
Phædra—but no; gods, let this dreadful secret
Remain forever buried in oblivion.

In the third act Phædra appears, refusing the honors that are offered to her. "Hide me, rather," she cries. "I have spoken what should never have been uttered." Her mind dwells on the terrible interview, the fatal confession. But prudent Œnone asks, Would it not be better to seek forgetfulness in nobler cares, to reign, and thus escape private distress? Phædra, with loftier view, exclaims:

I reign? I rule a State, when my feeble reason cannot govern myself?—when I have lost all self-control?—when I can scarce breathe under a shameful yoke?—when I am dying?

Œnone.—Then flee.

Phædra.—I cannot leave him.

Œn.—You dared to banish him once, yet you cannot avoid him now.

Phæ.—It is too late. He knows my madness. The boundaries of modesty are passed. I have unveiled my shame before my conqueror, and in spite of myself hope has stolen into my heart.

Œnone agrees that it is useless to attempt to move the heart of a proud, cruel son of a barbarian mother, but Phædra replies that though his mother was a Scythian, still she loved. Then she bids Œnone offer him the crown of Athens, saying, "Thy words will have better access to him than mine." When Œnone departs on this errand, Phædra appeals to Venus to subdue the

proud heart of Hippolytus. But in the midst of her prayers, Œnone returns with strange tidings.

Œnone.—Banish the thought of vain love. Madam, recall your lost strength. The king, who was thought dead, returns to your eyes. Theseus has come back. Theseus is here——

Phædra.—Just heaven! what do I hear? My husband comes, and his son with him. The witness of my terrible love will watch the welcome I give to his father—my heart still big with sighs he would not hear; my eyes wet with tears he heeded not. Think you that he, jealous of the honor of Theseus, will hide my shame from him? And even were he silent, it would be in vain. I know my treason, Œnone. I am not one of these bold women who wear an unblushing front, and are tranquil in the midst of crime. I know of what I am guilty. I remember all. These walls, these vaulted roofs, seem ready to utter speech, and await my husband to accuse me. Let me die! Let death deliver me from so many horrors. Is it such a great misfortune to cease to live? Death has no terrors for the unhappy. I fear only the bad name I shall leave behind me. My poor children, what an inheritance do I bequeath to them! The blood of Jupiter may swell their courage; but even with the just pride of that great descent, heavy is the burden of a mother's crime.

Œn.—Never was fear more just than yours; but why, then, expose them to such ignominy? Why accuse yourself? It will be said that Phædra, conscious of her own guilt, could not face her husband. Hippolytus is happy to find a witness for all his accusations in yourself. . . . . Yield not so easily the victory to him. Accuse him first of the charge he may bring against you. Who will contradict you? Everything is against him; his sword that happily he left in your hands, your present trouble, your past grief, your warnings to his father against him, his exile obtained by your efforts.

But when Phædra refuses to commit this new crime, Œnone takes the horrible task upon herself and assures her mistress that Theseus will do no more than banish

his son. Before she has finished her argument Theseus enters and rushes forward to embrace his wife, who exclaims:

> Stay, Theseus, profane not such holy transports. No longer do I deserve your fond greetings. You are offended. In your absence jealous fortune has not spared your wife. I am not worthy to be loved or to approach you. Henceforth I must study to hide my shame.

Phædra withdraws, and Theseus, bewildered, asks his son for an explanation. Hippolytus replies that she alone can explain, but declares that he can never see her more. The father inquires if he is going to leave him, and Hippolytus begs that he may be allowed to visit other countries and not pass his time in idleness.

Theseus, overwhelmed with amazement and grief, cries out in astonishment at the strange reception he has met at his own home from his wife and son. He demands that the unknown crime be revealed and the perpetrator punished.

In the fourth act Theseus is frantic at the story which Œnone has told, and when Hippolytus approaches, pours out his rage on the son's vile treachery and bids him flee, lest his death should stain his father's name. Then he invokes Neptune, who had long since promised his favor, to hear his first prayer and avenge him on his guilty son. Hippolytus listens with astonishment to the horrible charge, but is too generous to break his father's heart with a counter-accusation. He defends himself as well as he can without betraying the dreadful secret.

Hippolytus.—Examine my life: recall who I am. Great offenses always follow smaller faults. He who has once transgressed the bounds of law may some day violate the most holy ordinances. But vice, like virtue, has degrees. Never has timid innocence been seen to pass at once into wild license. One day cannot make of a good man a traitorous murderer nor an incestuous villain. I have not been false to my birth, nor to the chaste heroine at whose breast I was reared. No, my lord, I have always shown hatred of such vices. Such is the reputation Hippolytus has throughout Greece. I have pushed virtue to austerity. Day is not more pure than the depth of my heart. And yet it is said that Hippolytus, seized with a vile passion——

Theseus.—Thy very pride, coward, condemns thee! I see the meaning of thy hateful coldness. Phædra alone pleased thy immodest eyes. Thy heart disdained an innocent love.

Hipp.—No, my father, I have concealed it too long. This heart has not disdained a chaste love. I confess at your feet my real offense. I love; and I love, it is true, where you have forbidden me to cast my eyes. It is Aricia to whom my heart is subject. The daughter of Pallas has won your son. Her I adore; and my heart, rebellious to your commands, can only sigh and long for her.

Thes.—You love her? Heavens! But no! This artifice is too plain. You feign a crime to excuse yourself.

This verbal conflict between father and son becomes still more violent. Theseus will not believe the son's defense, and at last, wild with fury, drives him from his presence.

Phædra then appears, full of alarm and remorse, and entreats the father to be merciful. He assures her that his son is alive, and his punishment is left to Neptune. Then he informs her that Hippolytus had professed love for Aricia. This revelation has a powerful

effect on Phædra, and when she is left alone she bursts forth in heart-rending anguish. While she raves in distress, Œnone comes, thinking to save her mistress from some fatal catastrophe. But instead of bitter lamentations of remorse she hears only a mad outburst of jealousy. Phædra pictures to herself the meeting of the lovers, and is filled with rage at their happiness. She cries:

No! I cannot suffer a happiness which insults me. Œnone, have pity upon me. Aricia must die. My husband's wrath must be roused against her. Her crimes are worse than those of her brothers. What say I? My reason wanders. I jealous! And I ask Theseus to avenge me! My husband lives, and I yet love—but whom? What heart do I desire? At each word my very hair stands erect with horror. I breathe at once imposture and incest. My murderous hands long to plunge themselves in innocent blood. Wretch that I am! Yet I live, and affront the sight of that holy Sun from whom I am descended. My ancestor is father and lord of all the gods. Heaven, yea, all the universe is filled with my kindred. Where can I hide myself? If I go down into eternal darkness, my father Minos there holds the fatal urn, and has the fate of men in his austere hands. Ah! how that judge will shudder when he sees his daughter brought before him, obliged to acknowledge sins unheard-of even in hell! What wilt thou say, my father, to that horrible vision? I think I see the awful urn fall from thy hands. I think I see thee in thy despair seek out some new punishment, thou the executioner of thy child. It is the vengeance of a cruel god that has ruined thy race. In thy daughter's madness behold his wrath. Alas! I have gathered the fruit of the awful crime which disgraces me. Pursued by misfortune to my last sigh, I yield up in torment a life unsolaced by enjoyment.

Œnone strives to recall Phædra from despair. She bids her mistress dismiss her sorrow. Though she has been led astray by a fatal charm, she is not the only victim of love. Even the gods have submitted to its power.

But Phædra's rage is now turned against her confidante, whom she declares to be the cause of all her woe. She recalls the evil advice the nurse formerly gave, and its wicked and fearful results, and bids her begone to receive her just punishment from heaven.

Wretched Œnone, left alone, cries out, "I have done all, left all, only to serve her! I have my reward, and I deserve it well."

In the fifth act Aricia implores Hippolytus, in justice to himself, to reveal Phædra's guilt to Theseus; but his noble soul refuses to crush his father with this shame. He believes that Phædra will at last meet the ignominy she deserves. Then he asks Aricia to flee with him from this hateful spot, where even virtue is infected in the poisonous atmosphere. But the maiden shrinks from doing so while there is no lawful bond between them. Hippolytus suggests that there is a sacred temple outside of Trezene, where none dare swear falsely, for falsehood brings instant death. "Let us go there, and confirm an eternal love by a solemn oath. We will invoke the god to witness our vows, and pray to him to be our father."

As Aricia consents, Theseus is seen approaching, and she hurries Hippolytus away. When Theseus inquires what his son was doing there, she answers that he was bidding her farewell and swore eternal love. But

Theseus tells her not to believe him. Then she bursts forth in indignant defense of her lover, and protests against his being sacrificed to his malignant accusers. Theseus insists that he has sure witnesses of his son's guilt. Again protesting against his decision, Aricia leaves, fearing she may be forced to disclose the horrible crime.

Theseus, again bewildered with the mystery, calls for Œnone, but a woman comes to report that Œnone has drowned herself, and that Phædra is hopelessly insane. Still seeking explanation of the dreadful condition, Theseus orders his son to be called. He prays that Neptune will stay his hand and spare his son. But it is too late. Theramenes enters to relate the tragic fate of the guiltless youth. Hippolytus, in his chariot, was driving his favorite horses out of the city when they were frightened by the approach of a huge dragon from the sea. As the wave washed the monster ashore, Hippolytus wounded it with a javelin, but the maddened beast breathed forth flames, smoke and blood. The horses became unmanageable and dashed wildly over the rocks. Hippolytus fell, entangled in the reins, and was dragged swiftly along by the panic-stricken steeds. Theramenes had seen the catastrophe and hastened after them. He was able to receive the last words of the dying youth:

Heaven has robbed me of an innocent life. When I am gone, look thou to sad Aricia. Dear friend, if my father be ever undeceived, if he weep over the fate of his son so falsely accused, tell him for my sake to treat his captive kindly, and to restore her——

But the sentence was left unfinished.

While Theseus listens to the harrowing report, Phædra enters, and he turns upon her violently. "You triumph!" he cries, "and my son is slain." But Phædra has already resolved to confess all.

Phædra.—My time is short. Listen to me, Theseus. It was I who looked with profane eyes upon your chaste and virtuous son. Heaven put a fatal passion into my bosom. The hateful Œnone carried out its plan. Fearing that Hippolytus should betray to you a love which filled him with horror, she, the traitress, abusing my weakness, hastened to accuse him first. She is punished. Flying from my anger, she has found under the waves a fate more merciful than she deserved. Already my life should have been cut short by the sword. But that would have left a doubt on slandered virtue. That you may know my remorse, I have chosen to die more slowly. I have infused into my burning veins a poison which Medea brought from Athens. The venom has now reached my heart and thrown there an unknown chill. Already I see, as through a cloud, heaven and the husband whom my presence insults. Death, withdrawing the light from my eyes, gives back to the day which they defiled all its purity.

It is only in the plays of Shakespeare and the graver comedies of Molière that we find any character worthy of comparison with *Phèdre.* In the Greek and Roman tragedies on the same subject, where the death of Hippolytus is treated as the chief source of interest, the miserable wife of Theseus engages little or no sympathy. Her passion for the young warrior is essentially material, and in covering him with infamy she acts of her own free will. Racine represents her in a finer light—as a

woman struggling with all the energy of a high and noble nature against the illicit yearnings instilled into her by Aphrodite, as loathing herself with increasing intensity as she sinks lower and lower into the abyss of guilt, as refusing to accuse Hippolytus until she has been craftily goaded to frenzy by the nurse, and finally as a prey to bitter though unavailing remorse. It was a great and original conception, worked out with all the force that could be imparted to it by analytic insight, imaginative art and beauty of diction. Inferior to Euripides in *Iphigénie*, Racine here surpassed his model, besides furnishing the French stage with the finest tragic character, though not the finest play, yet seen upon it.

Thomas Corneille's Don Juan.

Pradon's *Phèdre* was followed at the Guénégaud by Thomas Corneille's *Don Juan*, borrowed entirely from Molière's play, and very much marred in the borrowing. At the instance of Armande, Corneille had turned the nervous and flexible prose of the original into more or less stilted verse, at the same time deferring to overnice susceptibilities so far as to eliminate or soften many passages essential to the really blameless purpose of the author; for Molière's *Don Juan* is purity itself when compared with other versions of this time-worn, but ever popular, legend, with barely a trace of the voluptuous tone, the universal love-making, which Byron attributes to his all-conquering but somewhat effeminate hero. It is indeed grievous to see that the posthumous fame of Molière should thus have suffered at the hands

of the woman who owed to him fortune, social distinction and an illustrious name.

Death of Pradon.

In 1677 a new tragedy by Pradon, entitled *Electre,* sealed his doom. The cabal, alive to the ridiculous nature of the position in which they had placed themselves, abandoned the author to his fate, and ceased to show any desire either for his plays or his society. Deprived of their support, *Electre* failed most ingloriously; it was hissed off the stage—the first time such a mark of disapproval had been used by a French audience. In the middle of the pit, with his face half buried in a cloak, was the unhappy author himself, who, failing to understand why his *Phèdre* had produced so poor an effect, had gone thither with a friend to hear the criticisms passed upon his work. When the hisses came he stamped his foot with rage. "Monsieur," said his companion, "you may be recognized; do not let it be said that you are crushed by this reverse; hiss like the others." Pradon, perceiving that the doom of the play was sealed, grimly followed the advice. Near him stood a mousquetaire on duty in the theatre. "What is the meaning of this noise?" the latter angrily asked him; "the piece is a fine one, and the author is a man of consideration at court." "I shall hiss as long as I like," was the reply. The mousquetaire, who was an ill-tempered man, tore off the poet's peruke, doubled it up, and hurled it to the side of the theatre. Pradon fiercely flew at him, and in a few moments, bleeding

from a wound he had received in the scuffle, was hustled into the street.

Corneille Offends Racine.

In the course of a meeting at the Academy, Pierre Corneille highly commended Boursault's tragedy of *Germanicus,* even to the extent of saying that it wanted only the name of Racine, in whose hearing he spoke, to be deemed a great work. Boursault dwells upon this utterance with amusing complacency. To him, he said, it was extremely gratifying to find a man so famous as M. Corneille "pronouncing *Germanicus* to be worthy of so great a name as that of Racine." The fact is that Corneille had simply indulged in a little pleasantry at the expense of his illustrious rival, as he well knew that *Germanicus* was at best an indifferent work. But Racine, mistaking Corneille's intention, made some bitter and sarcastic retort; high words followed between the authors of the *Cid* and *Phèdre*, and the coolness which had before existed between them was so far increased that they never spoke to each other again. Racine could well afford to laugh at what was clearly nothing more than a little raillery, but his amour propre was too deep and sensitive to be under the control of his better judgment.

Retirement of Racine.

Before the end of 1677, at the early age of thirty-eight, the too sensitive Racine, weary of the struggle with bitter foes, in spite of his substantial vic-

tories, definitely abandoned the profession which he adopted with so much ardor in his youth. Soon after the production of *Phèdre*, thanks to the mediation of Boileau, he effected a reconciliation with the theatre-hating Port Royalists, who in a short time obtained a complete ascendancy over him. Soon he married Catharine de Romanet, a lady of birth and a little fortune, described as "amiable, but religious to the point of bigotry." It is said that she never knew her husband's plays except by their names—plays which, whatever may be thought of his personal character, were defaced by no unholy or impure thoughts, could not but strengthen every worthy resolution in their hearers, and had already been accepted by the world as among the noblest efforts of genius. In his new-born pietism, with such a woman by his side, the poet naturally began to ask himself whether he had not committed a crime in the eyes of God by working for the theatre.

By aid of Mme. de Montespan, whose good opinion he had been careful to win, he became joint historiographer royal with Boileau, and the task that now awaited him was arduous and delicate enough to claim undivided attention. Rumor had long credited him with an intention to write an *Alceste*, but it was now made known that henceforward he would be prevented by religious scruples from treating that or any other subject for the stage. Many of his contemporaries questioned the realty of this conversion, seeing that he continued to be an obsequious courtier, to participate freely in the frivolities of Versailles, and to exercise his caustic wit in verses against even needy gleaners in the

field where he had reaped so abundant a harvest. "I have been told," Boileau once remarked, "that Racine is my superior as a satirist; he certainly surpasses me in bitterness." On the other hand, this voluntary abandonment of the stage by a man like the author of *Phèdre*—hungry for distinction, proud of success and still in the full possession of his genius—is not to be adequately explained by anything short of fanaticism, though his conduct was often at variance with the spirit and letter of the faith he now held in such profound and self-sacrificing reverence.

II.

Formation of the Théâtre Français

Racine's abdication of the throne of dramatic poetry was almost coincident with the sweeping changes in theatrical affairs introduced by the formation of what is known as the Théâtre Français or Comédie Française. Louis XIV, it must be premised, regarded state aid as essential to the interests of literature and art, and was determined that every means of influencing the opinion of his subjects should be under the immediate control of the court. In the summer of 1680, mindful of the power acquired by the drama, he suddenly applied these ideas to the theatre as it existed in Paris. He issued an order to the effect that the two troupes should form themselves into one, take up their quarters at the playhouse in the Rue Mazarine, and be granted a subvention of 12,000 livres a year. No other actors would be allowed to ply their vocation in the town or faubourgs without his majesty's express permission, but the Italian comedians, who had played alternately with Molière's company at the Guénégaud since 1673, would migrate to the Bourgogne. In the lettre de cachet, signed at Versailles by Louis himself, with Col-

bert and Scelle as witnesses, we are told that the object of the union of the two troupes was to "render the representations of comedies more complete, and to afford the players the means of perfecting themselves in their art."

Fontenelle.

Corneille's nephew, Fontenelle, cured of any taste he may have had for the law by the failure of the first case placed in his hands, resolved to trouble himself with nothing but literature; and a tragedy from his pen, entitled *Aspar*, was now accepted. Devisé, prompted by Thomas Corneille, sounded the praises of the new poet in no uncertain voice. "Inheriting," he said, "the genius of his uncle, the author of the *Cid* and *Cinna*, M. de Fontenelle would at once leave all the younger dramatists behind, if not become the monarch of the scene." The consequences of this puff need hardly be stated. Extravagant expectations as to the quality of *Aspar* were aroused, and the play was so far beneath them as to become an object of popular derision. Racine, imagining that Devisé's article was an elaborate sneer at himself, swelled the chorus against the inoffensive author by means of a bitter epigram. In the house of a veteran actor, we are told, a controversy arose as to which dramatist had first caused an audience to hiss. Some thought Boyer was the man; others wished to lay a wager on Pradon. Eventually the host recited the epigram which declared Fontenelle to be the offender. The unenviable distinction had really been acquired, as we have seen, by Pradon, as a well-deserved

rebuke for inflicting his *Electre* on the play-going public in competition with Racine.

La Comète.

Unsuccessful as a tragic dramatist, Fontenelle now essayed his powers in comedy. *La Comète*, a small piece in prose, was from his pen, although produced under the name of Devisé. The plot had reference to the comet of the year 1677, which, by the swiftness of its progress and the enormous train of light it threw off, had created a feeling of awe and terror. An astrologer, believing that the celestial wanderer exercises a malign influence, postpones the marriage of his daughter until it has disappeared, but while he is observing it from a neighboring house with the comtesse de Soustignan, the lovers elope. *La Comète* was not very diverting except in one scene, and then only by reason of the fact that in an explanation of Descartes' system the author betrayed the most curious ignorance thereof. Fontenelle was so mortified by his second failure that he never wrote another play. Instead, he devoted himself to the study of the exact sciences, and his pleasant *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes*, published a few years afterward, was the result.

Campistron.

Among the minor dramatists who followed Racine was Jean Galbert Campistron, a young man from Toulouse, where his family, one entitled to call

itself noble, had been established since the middle of the previous century From boyhood he had aspired to distinction as a poet, and his father, a procureur-général, had sent him to Paris in the hope that a little intercourse with the world would serve to dispel such idle notions. This step, it need hardly be said, had the reverse effect. Jean Galbert became an inveterate play-goer, arrived at the conclusion that the drama was at once the best and pleasantest form of poetical expression, and at last, aided by Racine, whose acquaintance he chanced to make, wrote a *Virginie*. In due time it was taken to the theatre in the Rue Mazarine, where it was played with fair success. "I was so young when I composed *Virginie*," he remarked some years afterward, "that I am always astonished I should have had the temerity to begin and the power and happiness to finish it. Its success, though indifferent, did not allow me to despair." Here, as in other instances, the poet hardly did himself justice. *Virginie* enjoyed a moderate run, and of this it was by no means undeserving. The impressive Roman story is artistically told, and if the versification is over long, the defect is to a large extent redeemed by interesting situations and well-drawn characters.

In appearance Campistron hardly fulfilled the popular idea of a poet; his figure was thick-set, his face flat and round and his nose remarkably broad. It is said that he had an invincible repugnance to letter-writing, and, probably in order to save himself unnecessary trouble on this head, made his handwriting almost undecipherable. He seems to have been one

of the best-disposed of men and was always grateful for favors received. Mindful, for example, of his obligations to Raisin, in whose house he now lived, he resolved that all the heroines in his dramas should be played by that actor's wife, and even the advantage of having some of them in the hands of Champmêlé could not induce him to alter his mind on this point.

Death of the Queen.

The favor with which Corneille's *Andromède* had just been received now induced the players to revive his *Toisson d'Or*. The original prologue having reference to the king's marriage, they asked Lachapelle to furnish them with one more suitable to the year of grace 1683, and, on his doing so, instructed an actor to present him at his residence with fifteen louis d'or in return for his trouble. By a singular coincidence, just after Lachapelle's prologue had been spoken for the tenth time, a mounted messenger arrived with news of the queen's death. The performance was accordingly stopped, the money taken at the doors returned and the theatre closed until further orders. The period of public mourning over, the company reopened, by the king's permission, with *Rodogune and the Comtesse d'Escarbagnas.*

Louis XIV Marries Scarron's Widow.

Louis XIV did not long remain a widower. At midnight, in one of his cabinets at Versailles, a very few weeks after the death of his wife, he was married to

the widow of Scarron, who some years previously had become governess to the children of Madame de Montespan, and, under the title of the marquise de Maintenon, had won his esteem and regard without making any sacrifices inconsistent with her self-respect. The event was kept a profound secret, but was generally assumed to have taken place. The influence which Madame de Maintenon exercised over her royal husband was generally for good. The beautiful and lively Françoise d'Aubigné, of times gone by, had become austerely devout, and under her sway the court all but relieved itself from the taint of licentiousness. Her unworldliness, however, seems in one or two instances to have carried her a little too far, and from the hour of her ascendancy the drama was not so largely honored as it had been.

Novelties at the Théâtre Français.

Boursault now made another essay in tragedy, courageously selecting the story of the ill-starred Mary, queen of Scots, for his theme. The piece did not succeed, but at the same time the author had reason to congratulate himself upon having written it; for the duc d'Aignan, to whom it was dedicated, presented him with a hundred louis. The abbé Genest's *Pénélope*, though unfavorably received, was so full of beauties of detail that the verdict at first pronounced upon it was eventually reversed, and the author, who had intended to suppress it, then laid it at the feet of the duchesse d'Orleans. The players next produced Campistron's

second tragedy, *Arminius*, the author at the same time printing it with a dedicatory epistle to the dreaded duchesse de Bouillon. In arrangement and writing the piece is excellent, but the characters are far from clearly drawn. Flattered by the homage rendered to her by the author, the duchesse became one of the most fervent admirers of his stage work—and his *Arminius* proved more successful than its merits deserved. Campistron also wrote for Mdlle. Raisin his comedy *L'Amante Amant*, in which, as in Montfleuri's piece, the heroine appears as a gay cavalier. Brightly written—though so indelicate that the author afterward disavowed it—and strengthened by the spirited acting of Mdlle. Raisin, now, of course, on her mettle, *L'Amante Amant* took the fancy of the town. Mdlle. Guiot, hitherto regarded as a mediocre player, also did good service here. Brécourt's *Timon* was an undramatic dramatization of Lucien's dialogue, but was represented seventeen times.

Baron, the most accomplished actor of the reign of Louis XIV, merits notice. Idolized by the public, caressed by society and studied by most of his fellow-men, clergymen not excepted, as a model of bearing and elocution, he conceived a somewhat extravagant idea of the importance of his art, and an absurdly extravagant idea of his own talents. His self-assertion was loud and persistent enough to pass into a proverb, and ridiculous enough to set all Paris laughing. "Since the dawn of history," he said, "the world has seen only two great actors—Roscius and myself. Every century has its Cæsar; two thousand years are required to produce a Baron." Egregious as his vanity was, however, it did

not hinder him from adopting a good suggestion. In *Mithridate*, before replying to the excuses of the two princes, it was long his custom to assume an air of deep reflection. One of his comrades held this to be misplaced. "Mithridates," said the critic, "ought to reply to his sons on appearing with them, for such a man as he was would perceive the true aspect of the most important affairs in a moment." Baron, struck by the force of the argument, promptly made the needed change in his performance—a proof that the artist was stronger than the man.

But even as a man Baron possessed many claims to our respect. He had the spirit to resent any insolence to which a member of the company might be subjected behind the scenes by the coxcombs assembled there; he was also open-handed to a fault and he gave so unostentatiously that none but the recipients were aware of his gifts. In the salons, continuing the work begun by others, he did much to soften the stigma which the Church cast upon the histrionic profession; his manners were indicative of good breeding, and the education given him by Molière, of whom he spoke with filial tenderness and reverence, had more than atoned for the neglect he suffered in his orphan boyhood. He found personal friends in men by no means disposed to make their friendship cheap.

Death of Corneille.

It was just as Baron reached the zenith of his power that the venerable figure of Corneille disappeared from

the theatre of life. In the records of the poet's closing days we have a striking instance of the contrast often presented between the public position and private circumstances of the man of genius. His fame, thanks in some measure to the controversy provoked by the appearance of Racine, now stood at a higher point than it had previously reached. By all classes of his fellow-countrymen, from the king down to the workman, it was felt that he more than merited the epithet of "le grand." He could not stir out of his dingy abode in the Rue d'Argenteuil without receiving marks of respect from persons with whom he had never exchanged a word, but who numbered the *Cid* and *Polyeucte* among the dearest treasures of their memories. One evening, having unexpectedly appeared in a box at the theatre, after a long absence, he became the object of a remarkable demonstration; the players interrupted the performance to pay him homage and the whole of the audience, which included Condé and other illustrious personages, rose and warmly cheered him.

Yet the recipient of these almost royal honors was then in extreme destitution. His pension from the court, at no time regularly paid, had been temporarily stopped, and only the precarious earnings of his brother, as a playwriter and journalist, stood between him and absolute starvation. His inveterate pride enabled the aged poet to disguise his misery as much as possible. Presently, however, the truth came to the knowledge of Boileau, who at once brought it to the notice of the king. "Sire," he said, possibly with a vein of sarcasm beneath the elaborate deference of his manner, "a little

bread for the great Corneille! Let him have my pension; I should be ashamed to receive it if he were in want." His majesty sent Corneille two hundred louis, at the same time ordering that the suspended pension should not be withheld in future. The largess came too late. Forty-eight hours afterward the author of the *Cid*, enfeebled in mind and body by age and privation, passed away in the presence of all the surviving members of his family, by whom his remains were laid at rest in the church of St. Roch.

Racine's Tribute to Corneille.

The finest tribute laid upon the grave of the illustrious dramatist came from his rival. Corneille was succeeded at the Academy by his brother; and Racine, anxious to soften the reproach he had brought upon himself by his insolence toward Corneille when living, appeared at the reception of the new member to do honor to the dead. "In what state," he said in the course of his address, which had previously been read and approved by the king, "was the French stage when Corneille began to work? It was without order, regularity, taste, morals, characters or any perception of true dramatic beauty. Most of its subjects were extravagant enough to be destitute of all probability; its language depended for effect chiefly upon miserable quibbling. Every rule of art, every rule of self-respect and decency, was constantly violated. In this infancy, or rather chaos, of dramatic poetry in France, Corneille, after endeavoring for some time to strike into a higher

path, was impelled by an exceptional genius to bring reason upon the scene—reason accompanied by all the majesty and embellishments of which our language is susceptible—and combined the semblance of truth with the marvellous. He went far ahead of his rivals, the majority of whom, no longer daring to struggle with him for the prize, vainly tried to depreciate the merit they were unable to equal. Where, indeed, can we find a poet uniting in himself so many rare gifts, such art, force, judgment and imagination? How noble his subjects; how energetic his pictures of passion; how grave his sentiments; how dignified and varied his characters! His heroes are always what they ought to be, always uniform with themselves, always differing from one another. Magnificent in expression, he could yet descend at will to the most simple naïvetés of comedy, where he was likewise inimitable. Lastly—and this was his most distinctive characteristic—he had a certain power and elevation which lifted us out of ourselves, even to the extent of blinding us to his faults, if faults he can be said to have had. He was born for the glory of his country; his masterpieces will ever be on the lips of men. He is to be compared, I do not say with the tragic poetry of ancient Rome, since Rome was confessedly not very fortunate in this branch of letters, but with Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, who were no less honored by the Athenians than Themistocles, Pericles and Alcibiades." In some respects, perhaps, the orator went a little too far in his praise; but with a few slight exceptions this eulogy might well have been inscribed in letters of gold upon the simple slab which marked his

resting-place; for to Corneille no such monument was raised as was at all in keeping with his fame.

Review of Corneille's Drama.

Corneille is justly revered as the first, and in some respects the greatest, of the great masters of French tragedy, whatever may have been unsound in his theories or defective in his practice. The attempts of his predecessors had been without life, because they lacked really tragic characters and the play of really tragic passions, while their style had been either pedantically imitative or a medley of plagiarisms. He conquered tragedy at once for the national theatre and for the national literature, and this not by a long tentative process of production, but by a few masterpieces; for in his many later tragedies he never proved fully equal to himself. French tragedy, of which the great age begins with the *Cid, Horace, Cinna* and *Polyeucte,* was not, whatever it professed to be, a copy of the classical tragedy of the Greeks or Romans; nor was it an imitation of the Italian imitations of these; nor, though in his later tragedies Corneille, after the fashion of the Spaniards, depended less and less upon characters and more and more upon situations, were the forms of the Spanish drama able to assert their dominion over the French tragic stage. The mould of French tragedy was cast by Corneille, but the creative power of his genius was unable to fill it with more than a few examples. His range of passions and characters was limited; he preferred, he said, the reproach of having made his women

too heroic to that of having made his men effeminate. His actions inclined too much to the exhibition of conflicts political rather than broadly ethical in their significance. The defects of his style are of less moment; but in this, as in other respects, he cannot, with all his strength and brilliancy, be ranked among those rarest of artists who are at once the example and the despair of their successors.

A Comedy by Baron.

Dissatisfied with the characters devised for him by contemporary dramatists, and not content, perhaps, with the laurels he had won as an actor, Baron himself began to write. His first essay was a prose comedy in three acts, *Le Rendezvous des Tuileries, ou Le Coquet Trompé.* If, contrary to his expectations, the world declined to accept him as a Molière in embryo, or even as a writer of more than ordinary talents, his new ambition was not inexcusable. Strong intelligence and long experience on the stage had made him acquainted with the chief principles of dramatic effect, and his intercourse with the lively society of his day furnished him with hints by which he knew how to profit. The *Rendezvous des Tuileries* merely shows a young lady proving the infidelity of a nominal lover by means of a pretended appointment—certainly no very novel or interesting story. On the other hand, the dialogue is not without animation, and the leading figures, notably those of a coquette and a pert waiting-maid, have a degree of freshness hardly to be looked for in the treat-

ment of well-worn materials. In his prologue the author gives us a few satirical sketches of the Comédiens du Roi, not sparing himself, and of the coxcombs who, ensconced on the stage, hissed or applauded a play, as the shallowest caprice might dictate.

New Regulations.

The position of the players at the Théâtre Français was strengthened by new regulations issued at this time. The king, more alive than ever to the power of the drama as a means of influencing public opinion, assigned the care of the two theatres in Paris to the dauphiness, ostensibly "pour faire plaisir a cette princesse," but really to bring them as much as possible under the domination of the court. Madame la Dauphine, "after making due inquiries," drew up a series of regulations in regard to the Comédie. The troupe was always to consist of a number of players sufficient to adequately play a piece in the royal palaces when his majesty wished to be so amused. They would receive their orders from the first gentleman of the chamber through the medium of the intendents and controleurs. The contract of 1681 should be observed to the letter, any difficulties arising under it being inquired into and reported by the aforesaid intendent and controleur to the first gentleman, who would settle the matter as he thought right. The pensions awarded to retired players were to be paid in full. The casts of pieces were to continue as arranged by the authors, but for the good of the service and the convenience of

the troupe all the characters should be understudied by those who, in the estimation of the company as a body, should be the most capable of filling them. The characters of new plays should also be distributed by the authors and doubled. In order to prevent disputes, no piece was to be played without the consent of the whole company, and in order to preserve harmony in the theatre all quarrels in business among the players should be adjusted by the first gentleman as he thought fit. Such, stripped of their verbiage, were the new regulations.

Persecution of Protestants.

Unfortunately for the Comédie, the edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685, whereby the players were to lose a considerable portion of their regular audience. It was at the instance of the Church in France that Louis XIV crowned a long series of regulations against the Protestants by revoking the edict under which they had enjoyed freedom of worship. Madame de Maintenon might have saved him from so dire a mistake, but a fear lest any intervention on her part should be ascribed to a lingering sympathy with her former creed induced her to look on in silence. It was ordered that all Huguenot places of worship should be destroyed; that all unconverted ministers found in France, fifteen days after the date of the measure, should be sent to the galleys, and that the property of those who persisted in the exercise of their religion should be confiscated. Nor was the king content with merely issuing the decree. He sent troops in nearly all directions to

enforce it. In every quarter of Paris were heard accounts of children being dragged from their parents and shut up in convents, of girls being ravished by the brutal soldiery, of refractory Huguenots being stripped of their possessions, sent to the stake or the wheel or murdered outright.

Acis et Galatée.

Campistron now became more than usually conspicuous. The libertine duc de Vendôme had invited the dauphin to Anet, and was anxious that a new opera should be played there during the royal visit. He accordingly enlisted the services of Lulli, and, finding that Quinault had laid down the pen forever, besought Racine to write the libretto. The poet excused himself, at the same time suggesting that the task should be allotted to Campistron. The suggestion was adopted; the young dramatist hastened to confer with Lulli, and the result of their joint labors was the musical pastoral of *Acis et Galatée*—the last work, as it proved, of the maestro. The fête, which cost the duke 100,000 livres —a sum he could ill spare—had all possible success. The graceful château erected by Diane de Poitiers in place of the old manor-house of the De Brézes was the scene, during a whole week, of an almost incessant round of gayety. Now a hunting party was issuing from the gateway; now the grounds were alive with fair dames and gallant cavaliers; now high wassail was held in the banqueting hall. The company was decidedly of a mixed character. M. le duc and his titled guests were surrounded by men of letters, musicians,

ACIS AND GALATEA

After an original painting by L. Thiersch

We have here the scene where Galatea, daughter of Thetis and Amphitrite, plays with and deludes her rustic lover of the shore, the one-eyed Polyphemus, fooling him as completely as did Ulysses—the one by love, the other by wine.

and the singers and dancers brought from Paris to give due effect to the opera. Distinguished poets recited unpublished verses at every repast. The witty abbé de Chaulieu sang the praises of inconstancy; Lafare, in reply to the princesse de Conti, maintained that men of that time loved more and better than those of old. The verses were by no means too delicate, but the presence of the dauphiness and other ladies of high station saved the fête from degenerating into an orgie. Says Lafare in his *Mémoires*, "As le grand prieur, the abbé Chaulieu, and myself had each a mistress at the opera, ill-natured people said that we had induced M. de Vendôme to spend 100,000 livres to divert ourselves and our damsels; but we had higher objects than that." We may admit the latter statement without dismissing the accusation which called it forth. The duke and his companions were not merely desirous that a work of musical and poetical genius should be produced on the occasion, but that they attached great importance to the new pastoral there is no doubt. In no respect could *Acis et Galatée* have fallen below their just expectations, and the still youthful author of the verse was rewarded with thanks and a hundred louis.

Phraate.

Campistron now took up his residence at Anet, and there, surrounded by souvenirs of the illicit loves of Henri II and Diane de Poitiers—souvenirs not excluded from the chapel itself—completed a tragedy derived from Parthian history, which presently appeared at the

Comédie Française under the title of *Phraate*. No little sensation was created by some of the passages, in which the tyranny and vices and prodigality of kings were assailed with great spirit. The audience, recovering from its surprise, immediately divided into hostile sections. Those who did not approve all the proceedings of the Grand Monarque were naturally delighted; others declared that the audacious author deserved to be sent to the bastille. The players were for retaining the piece in the bills; but Campistron, terrified by the storm he had raised, induced the dauphiness to order the play withdrawn, at the same time assuring her that he had simply complied with the exigencies of his subject, and that nothing had been further from his thoughts than an attack, directly or indirectly, upon the prince who had done so much for France. How far the obnoxious passages were intentional it is impossible to say, as the author had the wit to destroy the manuscript as soon as possible. The duc de Vendôme, who had made him his secretary, instead of dispensing with his services, seemed from this time to hold him in higher regard than before. Even Campistron's unconquerable repugnance to letter-writing did not qualify this feeling. "Don't let me disturb you," the duke good-naturedly remarked to the dramatist, surprising him in the act of burning a basketful of letters: "I see you are occupied in making replies."

Among the novelties of the season was a *Regulus* by Pradon, which was by no means without merit, especially in the scene where the Roman general returns to Carthage to die.

III.

Revival of the Religious Drama.

The pietism of the court of Louis XIV under the regulation of Madame de Maintenon was of direct service to dramatic literature. She had established at Saint Cyr a school in which poor but well-born girls might be educated. This education was in the main of a religious character, but as a means of purifying their tastes and strengthening their judgment, the pupils were allowed to perform in strictly moral plays. By no one was this concession hailed with greater satisfaction than the preceptress, Madame de Brinon. Possessed with a mania for writing and speech-making, she preached to and wrote comedies for the girls committed to her care. "I am disposed to think," said Madame de Maintenon, after one of the performances, "that we might have something from Corneille and Racine—if there is not too much love in it." The preceptress obediently took the hint, and *Cinna* and *Andromaque* were played. In choosing the latter tragedy, perhaps Madame de Brinon had her own interests in view. Irreproachable as was the care with which the pupils were trained, they would be daughters of Eve enough

to give a most fervid expression to all the tender passages in the play, and it was probable that Madame de Maintenon would deem it prudent to return to the discarded pieces. This hope was not realized, at least for some time. The pupils, it is true, acted *Andromaque* with a degree of earnestness which inspired the queen with the liveliest fears as to their future, but instead of having Madame de Brinon's efforts played again, she requested Racine to write for the Maison de Saint Cyr "a dramatic poem, moral or historic, from which love should be entirely excluded."

Racine's Esther.

Racine, who continued to reside in Paris, now playing the courtier, now discharging his duties as historiographer royal, now writing a pungent epigram at his enemies and aspiring dramatists, but more frequently than all engaged in religious meditations and observances, was not a little troubled by this order. He was about fifty years of age, and might easily diminish the splendor of the reputation he had won at the Bourgogne. "What would his enemies say if, after having triumphed in the secular theatre, he suffered a reverse in a theatre consecrated to piety?" His first impulse was to excuse himself, and Boileau, often disposed to fall in with his mood, advised him to do so. But on further reflection he determined to comply with the request, partly in order to avoid giving offense to one who, for anything he knew to the contrary, was the king's mistress, and partly because he saw in the story

of Esther a subject at once worthy of his powers and suited to the purpose in view. Boileau thereupon counselled him to accept, and in a short time *Esther* was completed. The poet's hand, it was clear, had not lost its cunning. The tragedy is excellent in both form and substance, and must ever hold a prominent place among his works. He reverently adhered to the original, as far as the story is concerned, bore Herodotus in mind to good purpose in delineating the character of Ahasuérus and introduced the chorus with a skill almost worthy of the Greek dramatists. It must be specially observed that, while restricting the action to the palace, he changed the decoration with each act, not in the hope that such an infringement of the rule as to unity of place would find imitators, but simply to render the piece more acceptable to the young players for whom it was created.

Racine was requested by Madame de Maintenon to prepare the pupils of Saint Cyr for their task—a dangerous undertaking for so impressionable a man, since most of them were personally attractive. One pupil, the Madame de Caylus of after-years, having testified an ardent desire to be included in the cast, Racine wrote for her the prologue, which is spoken by Piety. It may be presumed that he fulfilled his duties con amore. *Esther* was played for the first time during the carnival of 1689, the audience comprising the king, Madame de Maintenon, Louvois and many others of the French court. The success of the drama was instant and decisive, partly on account of its poetical beauty, but chiefly, no doubt, because every one perceived in

it an allegory flattering to the powers that were. The king was to be seen in Ahasuerus, the humbled Madame de Montespan in Vashti, the triumphant Madame de Maintenon in Esther, and the relentless Louvois in Haman. In regard to Esther, it must be said, the parallel was far from complete. Esther saved her nation; Madame de Maintenon, who had been brought up as a Huguenot, allowed the God of her fathers to be proscribed. This distinction was not suggested in the play, though it is remarkable that, only four years after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, and at a time when a man who suggested that a king could be misled was deemed guilty of "culpable temerity," Racine should have caused such words as, "The king, too credulous, has signed this edict," to be recited in the hearing of the authors of that measure. But if the king and his wife felt any resentment it was carefully disguised. "His majesty and all the court," writes Madame de Sévigné, who was present, "are charmed with Esther. Racine has surpassed himself"—and this seems to have echoed the general opinion. "He now loves God as he used to love his mistresses. He is for sacred what he was for profane themes; all is beautiful, all is great, all is written with dignity." The performance over, "the king, coming up to us, said, 'Madame, the maréchal de Bellefond tells me that you are pleased with the play.' I replied, with self-possession, 'Sire, I am charmed; what I feel is not to be expressed by words.' The king said to me, 'Racine has much esprit.' I replied, 'Sire, he has, indeed; but, in truth, these young ladies have it also; they enter into the

subject as if they had never done anything else.' He said, 'That is true,' and then his majesty went away and left me an object of envy." Not long afterward the king again came to Saint Cyr to see the play, bringing with him James II, who in the previous December had been driven from the English throne and was now a guest of France at St. Germain.

The players were anxious that *Esther* should be brought out at their theatre, but Racine persistently refused. Notwithstanding its success at Saint Cyr, it is doubtful whether it would have been well received at the Française; for on being printed it evoked but little commendation. By way of compensation to the company a trifle, called *Le Veau Perdu*, attributed in the registers to Champmêlé, but really written by La Fontaine, met with fair success.

Racine's Athalie.

The success of *Esther* revived in Racine the long-repressed desire for literary fame, and at the end of 1690 he wrote for the girls at Saint Cyr another tragedy of the same kind. This was his *Athalie*, perhaps the most beautiful, though not the most forcible, of his works. His enemies at court were at once up in arms. They assured Madame de Maintenon that the performance of even a Scriptural play could not but have a most pernicious effect upon immature minds. Madame yielded to these representations so far as to put an end to the spectacles at Saint Cyr altogether, but she somewhat inconsistently brought the pupils to Versailles on

two occasions to represent Racine's last tragedy. No stage was fitted up for the purpose, and the young actresses, if we may so call them, appeared in the simple costume which they wore in the school. In spite of these drawbacks, *Athalie* created a deep impression, and the king testified his satisfaction with the play. But fashion decreed that a piece written for children should be read only by children, and before long it became customary to speak of *Athalie*—although few had read it—in terms of mild contempt. Observing the perfect indifference of the public toward his tragedy, Racine feared that he had failed. "Reassure yourself," said Boileau, "the public will come to appreciate it at its proper value; it is your masterpiece." So also thought the Comédiens du Roi; but many years were to elapse before they had an opportunity of convincing the public that such was the case.

In *Athalie*, as in *Andromaque*, the incident is not confined to one or two personages. Jehoida, the high priest; Abner, the warrior; Athaliah, the wicked queen, and Mattan, her priest, are all characters that stand by themselves and leave each his own impression on the hearer or reader. Of the four, the high priest is the best. He and Nero in *Britannicus* are among the few male characters of Racine that are altogether satisfactory. As for Athaliah herself, we feel that we do not see quite enough of her. But it was the object of the dramatist to create in the minds of the spectators, and of the young people for whom the play was written, a horror of the wicked queen, rather than to expose her wickedness too visibly.

Athalie was represented at Saint-Cyr and at Versailles in 1691, and was printed in the same year; but neither that play nor *Esther* was performed at a public theatre in Paris until after the reign of Louis XIV. As a drama, *Athalie* gives us a graphic picture of the determination of the high priest to get the better of the queen, who had usurped the throne, and of his earnest endeavor to bring up the infant king in the right worship, and to preserve him from the dominion of Baal. There is a fine scene in which the child Joash is confronted with the queen. She had gone to see the boy; and as he stands before her boldly answering her questions, we see in his victory over her the good effect of his master's teaching. He has learned right from wrong, and knows how to speak out fearlessly, and to tell the goodness and the justice of his God. It was to teach this lesson that the play was written; and nowhere has Racine achieved his purpose with a finer or more real dramatic success, nor is there in any of his tragedies so much of majesty or of simple grandeur.

In this play Racine has introduced the chorus, as he had done previously in *Esther*. He says in his preface that he has endeavored to imitate the continuity of action as shown in the ancient drama, so that the stage should never be left empty—the intervals between the acts being shown by the songs of the chorus, and these songs having reference to what has previously happened on the stage. The chorus is composed of young virgins of the tribe of Levi. Salomith is their leader. She is an imaginary character, and is supposed to be the sister of Zechariah, and the daughter of Je-

hoida and Jehosheba. She introduces the chorus to her mother; she sings with it, and performs the functions of the coryphæus in the ancient drama.

The Chorus.—The God whose goodness filleth every clime,
Let all his creatures worship and adore;
Whose throne was reared before the birth of time,
To him be glory now and evermore.

A Voice.—The sons of violence in vain
Would check his people's grateful strain,
And blot his sacred name;
Yet day to day his power declares,
His bounty every creature shares,
His greatness all proclaim.

Another Voice.—Dispensing light and life at his behest,
Burst forth the sun by him in splendor drest;
But of Almighty love a brighter sign,
Shone forth thy law, pure, perfect, and divine!

The Chorus.—Justice with mercy to combine,
Is thine, O law, illustrious and divine,
Wisdom's bright crown, calm reason's rule supreme,
Of Israel's faith and love the blest eternal theme.

In the beginning of the second act Jehosheba tells the maidens to stop their singing, and she will go with them into the temple to join the public thanksgiving. As they are going, Zechariah, the son of the high priest and brother to Salomith, rushes on the stage, telling his mother that, as his father was at the altar offering the sacrifice, Athaliah had with a haughty step walked into the court that men only are allowed to enter, and was even about to go into the sacred place reserved for the priests.

Zechariah.—The people, alarmed, fled on all sides. My father—ah, what holy wrath lightened in his eyes! Moses before Pharaoh had seemed less terrible—my father turned upon her. "Queen," he said, "to this sacred ground, from which your sex and your iniquities alike banish you, do you come to brave the sacred majesty of God?" The queen, throwing a fierce glance upon him, opened her lips—to blaspheme, without doubt. I know not if the angel of God revealed himself before her with his glittering sword, but her tongue seemed frozen in her mouth, and her bold front was tamed in a moment. Her eyes in terror gazed around her. Above all, Eliakim struck her with wonder.

Jehosheba.—What! she has then seen Eliakim?

Zech.—We gazed together at that cruel queen, with an equal horror; but the priests wrapped us in their robes, and hurried us away. I know not what followed.

Jehosh.—Ah, she will tear him, doubtless, from our arms! It was he whom she came to seek at God's altar. Perhaps at this moment the object of so many tears — God remember David!——

Salomith.—Who is he—this object of so many tears?

Zech.—Is Eliakim then in danger?

Salo.—Why should he have drawn down the queen's anger?

Zech.—Who would fear a fatherless child?

Jehosh.—Ah, she comes! I will not meet her.

Athaliah, entering in great irritation after her interview with the priest in the temple, sends at once for Mattan, her priest and adviser. Abner, however, comes in first to calm her if possible. He tells the queen that she ought not to have been surprised at the warmth with which Jehoida spoke to her. She, the wife and the mother of a king of Judah, cannot be ignorant of the customs of the people. She must know that the God whom they serve has forbidden them all inter-

course with any other god. Seeing the apostate priest advancing, he attempts to withdraw, but is detained by the queen. She then makes a long address, and begins by exaggerating the authority of her own position and also palliating her own cruelties.

Athaliah.—**That which I have done, Abner, I have believed it to be my duty to do; a rash populace cannot be my judge, whatever their insolence has ventured to say; heaven itself has justified me. . . . But since some days fresh trouble has oppressed me. A dream—ought I to give countenance to a dream?—preys upon me, and devours my heart.**

She then tells her dream. One night her mother, Jezebel, had appeared before her richly adorned, her face painted, as was her custom, to hide the marks that time had made. "Tremble," she said, "my daughter, worthy of me; for God, the cruel God of Israel, prevails, and you will fall into his awful hands." Her mother's form had seemed to come near to her bed, and she had stretched forward to embrace it, but she found nothing but a hideous mass of mangled flesh and gore. A child had then appeared before her dressed like a young Hebrew priest. His modest mien and noble dignity for a moment calmed her fears; but all at once he drew a dagger, and in a moment plunged it into her breast. This dream had so haunted Athaliah that she prayed Baal to watch over her life; and she was even moved to go to the God of Israel, and bring him presents, in the hope that He would thereby be appeased, and that He would be merciful to her.

The child whom Athaliah had seen in her dream

was young Joash. He is a boy nine years old. The scene in which he is made to confront Athaliah is the most dramatic in the play. It is the pivot upon which all the action of the tragedy turns. Little Joash does not yet know who he is, nor even what is his name. He thinks he had been deserted by his mother, and that Jehoida has out of charity adopted him as his son. Hitherto he has not been called Joash, but Eliakim, though the name Eliakim is not applied to Joash in Scripture. When the boy comes in he is attended by Jehosheba, Abner, Zechariah, two Levites, and the whole choir. The queen is at once startled by seeing the same boy that she had already seen in her dream.

Ath.—Wife of Jehoida, is that your son?

Jehosh.—I am not his mother. (Pointing to Zechariah.) This is my son.

Ath.—And you, child, who is your father? Answer me.

Jehosh.—Heaven, till to-day.

Ath.—Why should you answer for him? Let him speak.

Jehosh.—At so tender an age, what explanation can he give?

Ath.—At his age he is innocent; he has no craft to alter the truth. Let him answer for himself.

Jehosh.—(Aside.) Great God, put wisdom in his mouth!

Ath.—What is your name?

Joash.—I am called Eliakim.

Ath.—Who is your father?

Jo.—I am, they tell me, an orphan, thrown since my birth into God's paternal arms.

Ath.—You are without parents?

Jo.—They have forsaken me.

Ath.—But you know at least where your home is?

Jo.—This temple is my home; I never knew any other.

Ath.—But who, then, cared for you in your infant years?

Jo.—Does God ever let his little children want? he feeds the birds, and everywhere his hand is seen. I pray to him every day, and every day at his altar he gives me food.

The queen is much astonished; she is touched by the boy's modesty, and by the softness of his speech. Jehosheba would take the child away; but Athaliah calls him back and continues:

Ath.—What is your daily occupation?

Jo.—I worship God. I am taught his law. In his divine book I learn to read. And already I begin to write it with my own hand.

Ath.—And what does this law teach you?

Jo.—That God desires us to love him; that he will avenge, sooner or later, those who blaspheme his holy name; that he is the defender of the timid orphan; that he will crush the proud man, and punish the murderer.

Ath.—I understand; but all the people in that place, what are they doing?

Jo.—Praising God.

Ath.—Does God desire that they should always pray?

Jo.—Other exercises are banished from his temple.

Ath.—What! have you no other pastime? I pity the sad fate of such a child as you. Come into my palace and see my splendor.

Jo.—No; for I should then forget the goodness of God.

Ath.—I will not ask you to forget him.

Jo.—But you do not pray to him.

Ath.—You may do so if you like.

Jo.—I should see you kneeling before another god.

Ath.—I have my god whom I worship, and you may worship yours: they are both powerful gods.

Jo.—You must fear him too. Mine only is God, madam. Yours is nothing.

Ath.—If you come with me I will give you every kind of pleasure.

Jo.—The happiness of wicked people flows away like a torrent.

Ath.—And who are the wicked?

Jehosh.—Excuse him, madam; he is but a child."

The queen says she wishes to see how the boy has been taught. She invites him to come and live with her. She tells him that she is the queen; he shall sit at her table and shall enjoy all her good things, if he will quit his mean occupation and change his present clothes for others. She promises also to treat him as though he were her own son.

Jo.—As your son!

Ath.—Yes. You say nothing.

Jo.—What a father should I leave! And for——

Ath.—Well?

Jo.—And for what a mother!

Ath.—(To Jehosheba.) His memory is faithful, and in all he says I see the teaching of Jehoida and your own. You employ the quiet in which I leave you to corrupt this simple childhood. You cultivate hate and fury in them—you make my name a horror to them!

At the same time, she does not try to excuse herself. She boldly avows that she glories in having avenged the house of Ahab. Why should she have pity upon those who had no pity upon her? She will return wrong for wrong, and murder for murder. She abhors the name of David, and though she is of his blood, while she lives his children shall be her enemies.

Jehosh.—In all you have done you have triumphed. But God sees, and is our judge.

Ath.—This God, who has so long been your hope, what will become of his prophecies? Let him send you your promised king—this son of David in whom you trust. . . . But we shall meet again. Adieu! I have seen what I wished to see, and I am satisfied.

The queen retires, and Jehoida enters attended by his Levites. He had not been present when the queen was questioning Joash, but he was sufficiently near to hear all that passed, and was ready to help the boy in case of need. He thanks Abner for his protection of Joash, and prepares to cleanse with blood the spots which Athaliah's unholy footsteps had polluted. Then the choir comes in and sings.

Chorus.—What star of lustre strikes our eyes,
How bright does this young wonder rise!
With what a noble scorn
He dares seduction's charms despise;
To high achievements born!

A Voice.—While at the impious decree
Thousands to Baal basely bend the knee,
An infant's voice has dared proclaim
The one adorable eternal name.
Thus before Jezebel, defiled with blood,
Denouncing vengeance, great Elijah stood.

Chorus.—Happy, thrice happy, must he prove,
The child who shares his heavenly father's love,
Who in a blessed hour his voice has heard,
And yields obedience to the sacred word!
'Tis his within the hallowed shrine,
By impious footsteps never trod,
To own the bounteous hand divine,
The guardian care of Israel's God.

O happy youth, so early blest,
On heaven's eternal truth forever rest!

The third act opens with the approach of Mattan, and Nabal, his associate. As the apostate is preparing to enter the temple, Zechariah steps forward and conjures him to go no further. It is forbidden, he says, to the profane to go into the place meant for the worshippers of God. Mattan has been sent by the queen with a message for the high priest's wife.

Jehosheba comes in, and Mattan addresses her in a flattering tone. He tells her that the queen, in spite of his advice and his remonstrances, has sent him to demand the person of Joash as a hostage. If Joash is given up to her she will allow the festival then in progress to go on without hurt or hindrance. Jehosheba is alarmed, and becomes indignant at the demand. Mattan does not know who Joash is; but he suspects him to be a child of high rank, whom Jehoida and his wife are keeping concealed for purposes of their own, and in talking to Jehosheba he endeavors to draw as much as he can of her secret from her. He warns her that suspicions are afloat as to who the child is, and he counsels her to contradict any idle rumors. Jehosheba answers without replying to his question. She tells him it is blasphemy in him, who has lived in deceit and treachery, to invoke God's name in the cause of truth.

Jehoida then comes into the porch of the temple and finds Mattan talking with his wife. His anger is suddenly roused to the highest pitch. He reproves his wife for allowing herself to speak to the false priest;

and he hurls his anathema upon Mattan, who slinks away in alarm. Jehosheba entreats her husband to take some further steps for Joash's safety. But Jehoida decides that the time has come for a decisive step. The boy must be made known to the faithful. Instead of hiding him, the royal crown must be placed upon his brow. The priest Azarias here enters, followed by the chorus of virgins, upon whom Jehoida looks with surprise. But when he learns their purpose to testify their faith in God, he is moved with prophetic rapture. The chorus then commence their songs at the end of the third act.

The fourth act opens with solemn preparations for the coronation. Jehosheba comes in with Joash and Zechariah on each side of her. One of the boys is carrying in his hands the book of the law, and the other is holding David's crown. A Levite precedes them, carrying David's sword. Joash asks his aunt the reason of so much ceremony. She places the crown upon his head, and tells him that before long his doubts will be cleared up; when that time shall come he shall know everything.

The boy sees Jehoida, whom he had always looked upon as his father, coming toward him; he rushes into the high priest's arms, and asks him what is going to happen. The high priest tells him it is now time that he knew what were the designs of God. Jehoida brings to the boy's recollection what he had already taught him of the rights and duties of kings, and of their obedience to God. He mentions Joram and Ahaziah as instances of bad men, and he induces Joash to prom-

ise him that he will not follow their example. Then prostrating himself at the boy's feet, he renders homage and bids him be worthy of David his ancestor. The boy is more confounded than before. Jehoida explains to him how his life had been saved, and he calls in the three chiefs of the tribe of Levi and tells them that they see their king. He has taken charge of his childhood; it is now their office, as ministers of God, to protect their sovereign. At the command of the high priest, the Levites swear that they will put Joash on the throne, and that they will not rest until the sword of David has avenged all his enemies. And Jehoida makes Joash promise that he will always make God his first care; that he will punish the wicked and be merciful to the good; that he will have compassion on the poor, recollecting that he was himself once poor and fatherless. Jehosheba, in her turn, bows down before the boy-king.

A Levite then enters in great alarm, saying that Athalia's trumpets are sounding on all sides, that torches are blazing among her standards, and that she is quickly collecting her army. All chance of help, he says, is cut off, for the mountain on which the temple is built is surrounded by Tyrian soldiers; and the enemy has been boasting that Abner is bound in chains. Jehosheba becomes afraid that her boy will be taken from her, but her husband reproves her for her want of confidence in God's power. The high priest divides his forces, placing the Levites at the four sides of the temple, so as to resist any attack should it be made. He exhorts each one courageously to maintain his post,

and commands them not to leave the temple until he gives them orders. As he is going out he tells the chorus to offer up their hymns to God.

Chorus.—Go forth, ye sons of Aaron, go—
Ne'er did your fathers' bosoms glow
To assert a nobler cause;
Go forth, exert your utmost might,
It is your king for whom ye fight—
Your king, your God, your laws!

A Voice.—Where are the darts thou once didst cast abroad?
Art thou no more a jealous God, O Lord?

Another Voice.—Where are thy favors to our fathers given?
Will nothing reach thine ear in our distress
Except the cry of Judah's wickedness?
Alas! hath mercy left the abode of heaven?

Chorus.—Where are the darts thou didst once cast abroad?
Art thou no more a jealous God, O Lord?

A Voice.—Of Judah's kings the sole remain!
Of David's stem thou lovely flower!
Must we behold thee fall again
Within a cruel mother's power?
Say, did an angel of the Lord
Thee when a helpless infant save?
Or did the mighty voice of God
Recall thy ashes from the grave?

At the beginning of the fifth act Zechariah comes in to tell his sister, Salomith, that the order for the battle has been given. Joash, he says, has been crowned and anointed king, to the great joy and delight of all the Levites. The high priest has set a guard over him, and will not allow him to be exposed to any danger. In the meanwhile Athaliah is scoffing at the brazen gates of the temple; she is waiting until her instruments of war should come to batter them and break them in.

Then there is heard a knocking outside the gates, and Abner enters at one door, and Jehoida and Jehosheba at another. It was thought that Abner was in chains, and the arrival of the warrior-chief now, at the moment of danger, is welcomed with much delight.

In the final scene Abner goes forth to the queen; and Jehoida warns Ishmael, one of the priests, that his orders must be strictly obeyed, lest suspicions be roused in the mind of Athaliah. Her entry is thus to be prepared.

Jehoida.—As soon as the queen, drunk with mad pride, has once crossed the threshold of the temple, that she may not turn back, let the warlike trumpets that instant sound, and spread a sudden dismay throughout the enemy's camp. Call all the people to the succor of the king, and proclaim to all ears the miracle that Joash lives.

The high priest is surrounded by priests and Levites. He makes them stand around the pillar on which the throne is placed; he seats Joash on the throne, and after a few words of exhortation he draws a curtain in front of it, so that this group is hidden from the spectators. When the preparations are complete, Athaliah enters.

Ath.—I find thee at last, traitor, pernicious author of so many plots, whose hope is in continual disturbance. Enemy of power! thy trust was in thy God. Art thou now undeceived? He has left in my power his temple and thy life. On the very altar where thou sacrificest, there ought I—— But I will content myself with the ransom thou hast offered. Fulfil thy promise. Where is this child, and where is the treasure that thou hidest?

Jehoi.—At once shalt thou be satisfied. Behold them both! (The curtain is drawn back. Joash is seen on his throne, his nurse kneeling at his right; Azarias, sword in hand, standing at his left hand; Zechariah and Salomith kneeling on the steps of the throne; several Levites with drawn swords arranged around.) Stand forth, dear child, blood of our kings. Know you, queen, the heir of the holiest of monarchs? At least thou wilt know the marks of thy dagger. Behold thy king, thy son, the son of Ahaziah. Ye people, and thou, Abner, behold Joash!

Ath.—Traitor!

Jehoi.—Seest thou that faithful woman? Thou knowest well whose nurse she was. He was stolen by Jehosheba from thy rage, received in the temple, and preserved by God. This is the only treasure of David left in my hands.

Ath.—Traitor! thy deception will be fatal to him. Soldiers, deliver me from this hateful phantom!

Jehoi.—Soldiers of the living God, defend your king!

In the meantime the temple is in the hands of the people. The queen finds that her followers do not answer to her call. She upbraids Abner for having, as she says, deceived her; and she tries to force her way out of the temple, threatening Jehoida and Abner with her army which she hears coming to her rescue.

Here, however, Ishmael enters and announces that Athaliah's soldiers have fled. The Levites outside have declared to the people what was going on within—that the son of Ahaziah has been preserved, and the daughter of Ahab has fallen in the snare. At the same time the trumpets have sounded, and spread dismay in Athaliah's camp. Joash is proclaimed king with loud shoutings. The holy city is given up to joy. The people bless God, and him whom He has sent. Baal is held in abomination, the gates of his temple broken, and Mat-

tan, his priest, is slain. Athaliah feels that her last hope is irrevocably gone from her.

Ath.—God of the Jews, thou hast got the victory! Yes, it is Joash. I deceive myself no longer. I acknowledge the bearing, the look of Ahaziah; everything betrays the blood that I hate. David, David is triumphant, and Ahab is destroyed. Merciless God, this is thy hand! 'Tis thou that, flattering me with hopes of vengeance, hast twenty times in a day set me against myself; now exciting my remorse for a child, now dazzling me with thought of those treasures which I had feared to give up to flames and pillage. Let him reign, then, this boy, thy care and thy work! and, to mark his advent, let him plunge his sword into my breast. Hear what his mother, dying, desires for him—desires, did I say? nay, prays and hopes—that, faithless to thy law, weary of thy yoke, faithful to the blood of Ahab he has inherited from me—like his grandsire, like his father, this son of David may abolish thy worship, profane thy altars, and avenge Athaliah, Ahab and Jezebel!

As she rushes out, followed by the Levites, Jehoida gives the order to seize and slay her outside the temple.

Jo.—(Descending from his throne.) God, who sees my trouble and distress, turn away these curses from me! Let them not be fulfilled. Let Joash die before he forget thee.

Jehoi.—(To the Levites.) Call the people, that they may see their king. Let them come and swear their allegiance to him. King, priests, people, full of gratitude, let us confirm the holy alliance of Jacob with God, and, humbled by the thought of all our wanderings, renew our vows to him who saves us. Abner, take thy place by the king. (Enter a Levite.) Has that infidel suffered for her crimes?

The Levite.—The sword has expiated the horrors of her life. Jerusalem, so long a prey to her fury, is delivered at last from her hateful yoke.

Jehoi.—By this terrible end, learn, O king of the Jews!—forget this never—that kings have in heaven an awful judge, innocence an avenger, orphans a father.

Says Schlegel, in speaking of *Athalie*: "Racine here exhibited himself for the last time, before taking leave of poetry and the world, in his whole strength. It is not only his most finished work, but I have no hesitation in declaring it to be, of all French tragedies, the one which, free from all mannerism, approaches the nearest to the grand style of the Greeks. The chorus is conceived fully in the ancient sense, though introduced in a different manner in order to suit modern music and the different arrangement of the modern theatre. The scene has all the majesty of a public action. Expectation, emotion and keen agitation succeed each other, and continually rise with the progress of the drama. With a severe abstinence from all foreign matter, there is still a display of the richest variety, sometimes of sweetness, but more frequently of majesty and grandeur. The inspiration of the prophet elevates the fancy to flights of more than usual boldness. Its import is exactly what that of a religious drama ought to be; on earth, the struggle between good and evil; and in heaven the wakeful eye of Providence beaming, from unapproachable glory, rays of constancy and resolution. All is animated by one breath—the poet's pious enthusiasm, of whose sincerity neither his life nor his work allow us a moment to doubt. This is the very point in which so many French works of art, with their great pretensions, are nevertheless deficient;

their authors were not inspired by a fervent love of their subject, but by the desire of external effect; and hence the vanity of the artist is continually breaking forth to throw a damp over our feelings."

Adherbal.

Racine, whose interest in the stage had been revived, went to the Comédie to witness the first performance of *Adherbal, Roi de Numidie*, a new tragedy by Joseph de Lagrange-Chancel. This dramatist, who was not yet eighteen years of age, threatened for a time to eclipse even the fame of Racine himself. Descended from a noble family, he was educated at the Collège de Perigueux and later at the Jesuits' college at Bordeaux, where he developed remarkable talents for poetry, throwing off graceful verses on any subject that might be proposed to him, and even correcting those of his masters. Finishing his college studies at the age of fourteen, his mother took him and his tragedy of *Jugurtha* to Paris, where they were introduced to the princess de Conti. Anxious to become the patroness of such a prodigy, the princess invited him to her home, made him one of her pages, and sent *Jugurtha* to Racine, who gave the young author excellent advice. Eventually the play was brought out at the Comédie, under the title of *Adherbal*, and was favorably received. But Lagrange had his faults. His transitions from one passion or emotion to another were entirely too rapid, presenting rather the shadows of characters than the characters themselves. His versification was often weak and ob-

scure; and most of his scenes were overloaded with incidents and dialogue.

Longepierre.

Another dramatist excited a notable controversy. Longepierre, late secretary to the duke de Berry, challenged the suffrages of the play-goers with a *Médée,* written "in the style of Sophocles and Euripides." The question as to the comparative merits of the ancients and the moderns had been revived with remarkable energy. Perrault, in order to flatter the vanity of the king, had declared in favor of the moderns. Boileau promptly entered the lists on behalf of the ancients, and the battle quickly spread to the entire literary world. No educated man found it possible to observe neutrality, and there was no evading the question, "For the ancients or the moderns?" The combatants on each side fell into some ludicrous errors, many of them showing only how little they knew what they were talking about. The admirers of the ancients held that in science, as well as in poetry and eloquence, their men were supreme; Corneille was declared by the moderns to be more than a match for all the Greek dramatists together. A similar discussion raged in England, and in both countries it was decided in favor of the ancient classics.

In the midst of such a dispute, a tragedy after the style of Sophocles or Euripides, no matter by whom it was written, could not but cause some excitement. Those who favored the ancients were predisposed to condemn it, as falling below the standard aimed at, and

the moderns insisted that it was a fair sample of what Sophocles or Euripides would have done in French. *Médée* was not a work strong enough to withstand this double ordeal, although Champmêlé represented the heroine. The author, in his regard for the severe simplicity of Greek tragedy, excluded anything in the shape of a love intrigue from the plot; but the consequent loss of interest, as was felt by the audience, was not atoned for by loftiness of conception, theatrical effect or force of diction. The play was withdrawn after a few representations, and Longepierre, perceiving that he had failed, made his pride as a martyr subordinate to his veneration for the ancients.

Regnard.

Jean François Regnard ranks, among French comedians, as second only to Molière. Dufresny had lately thrown off a one-act piece under the title of *Attendez-Moi sous l'Orme*, a story of rural love intrigue. Covetous of literary fame, Regnard bought it for three hundred livres and had it produced at the Comédie as his own. Represented only eleven times at the outset, it subsequently became a stock piece at the theatre. A few weeks later, however, he conclusively showed that he could succeed in the drama without assistance. His *La Sérénade*, a one-act comedy in prose, though conventional in plot and character, revealed some of Molière's peculiar qualities in a high degree—gayety, wit, ease and intuitive dramatic skill.

Regnard might have found good materials for a ro-

mantic play in the records of his own life. Eldest son of a prosperous grocer in Paris, he was born there in 1656 or 1657. In early manhood he lost his father, and, finding himself in possession of 40,000 livres, resolved to live for a time in Italy. He there became an inveterate gambler, but played with so much coolness and good fortune that on his return he was richer by at least 10,000 crowns. During a second visit to Italy, he met and fell in love with a married Provençale lady, Elvire de Prade, then staying with her husband at Bologna. "To see her and to love her," he says, "was for me the same thing." Before long M. de Prade abruptly set out with his wife for Rome, where he lived quietly, hoping to escape Regnard's notice. But the young man pursued them, and when they left Rome embarked on the same vessel. Hardly had they put to sea when a Turkish pirate swooped down upon them; and after a short fight, in which the captain and most of his crew were killed, the passengers were made prisoners, landed at Algiers, and sold as slaves to one Achmet Talem.

For about two years the future dramatist had to perform the hardest menial work, until he was promoted to be his master's cook. In this capacity he was transferred to Constantinople, where Achmet Talem, "the hardest man in all Barbary," found it expedient to set up a commercial establishment. Regnard's burden was lightened by the fact that Elvire had been sent with him to the Bosphorus, and intelligence reached them that M. de Prade had died in captivity at Algiers. Some accident gave Regnard an opportunity of communicat-

ing with his family, who transmitted 12,000 livres to the French consul at Constantinople to ransom their unfortunate relative and his beloved Provençale. By the time the money arrived, however, he found himself in an awkward position. Justly or unjustly, he was accused of entering into an intrigue with a Mohammedan girl, and was required by law to become a convert to her religion or die. He promptly chose the former course, but a slave in Achmet's seraglio, inflamed by all the hate of a woman scorned, induced her master to insist upon the immolation of his cook. It was then that the French consul came forward with his offer to ransom the two slaves. As might have been expected, Achmet's cupidity proved stronger than his reverence for the laws drawn up in the name of the prophet. Regnard and Elvire regained their liberty, and, imagining there was no further obstacle to their happiness, repaired homeward to be married. But in Paris a terrible blow awaited the lovers. Ransomed by priests, M. de Prade, the report of whose death was unfounded, reappeared in Paris; and Elvire, perhaps struck with remorse for her infidelity, resumed her position as his wife, with a determination never to speak to her companion in slavery again.

Regnard sought relief for his disappointment in the excitement of foreign travel. He went to Flanders, Holland, Denmark and Sweden. Next, at the instance of the Swedish king, to whom he had letters of recommendation, and accompanied by two friends, he visited Lapland, then all but a terra incognita to the rest of Europe. Having well explored the country the party

penetrated to the lake of Torno, and, ascending Mount Metavara, within sight of the frozen sea, carved on a rock some lines in Latin, stating that they had reached the end of the earth. Earth had indeed failed them; they could get no further north. Back to Stockholm they accordingly turned, to be received there by the king with all the honor due to travellers who had reached higher latitudes than any of their predecessors. Regnard, again left alone, passed into Poland, and was invited by John Sobieski to court. His majesty listened with evident interest to his guest's account of the Laplanders, sent every day to ascertain his wishes, and entertained him at dinner. He extended his tour to Hungary, Turkey and Germany. At length, cured of his passion for travel, for gambling, but not for the bewitching Elvire, he reappeared in Paris, where startling news awaited him. M. de Prade had just died, and Elvire, still under the influence of remorse, was on the point of entering a convent. Regnard spared no pains to divert her from this grim resolution, but apparently without effect. Henceforward the fair Provençale has no place in his biography.

The discarded lover soon became a conspicuous figure in French society. Opulent, hospitable, handsome, of pleasing manners, and furnished by foreign travel and wide reading with a large store of anecdote and information, he soon made a host of friends. Prominent votaries of the muses and of fashion gathered round him at his Parisian house, and at a pretty little château within a day's drive of the capital. He wrote for the Théâtre Italien a three-act comedy, *Le Divorce,*

which at first did not succeed; but Gherardi, who in the following year selected it for his first appearance, gave it a long-enduring vitality. Regnard added seven other pieces to the repertory of the same theatre, the best being one entitled *La Coquette*, and he also took part with Dufresny in several more.

Le Joueur.

Regnard's *Joueur* was represented for the first time near the close of 1696. No one, save the creator of *Tartuffe*, has set before us so striking a character as that of the generous and high-spirited youth who sacrifices to the dice-box most of what a man holds dear—peace of mind, health, fortune, a promising future, the portrait of a beloved mistress. No doubt, Regnard was indebted to his own experience of the gaming-table for some of the most graphic details of the picture, but the picture in its entirety could not have been executed by anything short of dramatic genius. The other characters, too, are drawn with singular skill. It is not easy to conceive a better specimen of the coquette ridicule than the comtesse, a livelier valet than Hector, or a more engaging soubrette than Nérine. In all respects, indeed, the work is one of the highest excellence, and the scene in which Valère, stretched upon a sofa, gloomily ponders over his losses, the valet meanwhile reading to him with imperturbable sang-froid the discourse of Seneca on the vanity of riches, stands alone. Nor were the audience lukewarm in acknowledging the merits of the play. *Le Joueur*

became the talk of the town, and the man who had worn chains at Algiers and Constantinople was recognized as the first comic dramatist of his time.

At the Comédie, following in the footsteps of Molière, though not in a servile spirit, he came very near his model in genuine gayety and dramatic skill, which form the highest and most distinctive feature of his work. His dialogues often show signs of hasty composition.

Jean de La Fontaine.

Jean de La Fontaine, famous as a fabulist, was the most noted poet of his time. He wished also to be a dramatist, but he never possessed the secret of captivating an audience. His pieces are wanting in the essential qualities of good plays, and his delightful style was of a nature to be appreciated in the library rather than the theatre. His earliest known work, written at Château Thierry, his native place, soon after his marriage, at a time when his peculiar genius had been nourished by the study of ancient and mediæval poetry, was a version of the *Eunuchus* of Plautus. It was printed in 1654, but does not seem to have been represented in Paris. For about thirty years he did not again trouble himself with stage work; for he was indolent, careless of fame, unless it came to him without much wooing, and lifted above want by a small patrimony and the hospitality of friends. He now separated from his wife; or rather, the separation seems to have been by mutual consent, for every autumn he paid her a friendly visit at Château Thierry, but failed

to muster more energy, during such periods, than was necessary to produce the *Contes* and the first and second parts of his *Fables*. *Ragotin* broke his long silence in regard to the theatre, and pleased the audience well enough, so that he was induced to write some other pieces. For the Palais Royal, while completing the third portion of his *Fables*, he wrote the score of two operas, *Astrée* and *Daphné*, neither of which succeeded. It appears that he did not rate his powers as a librettist very highly. "Detestable!" he frequently exclaimed in the theatre during the first act of *Astrée*. "Monsieur," said a lady by his side, not recognizing him, "it is really not so bad as you say. It is written by a man of fine wit—M. de La Fontaine." "M. de La Fontaine," was the reply, "is an ass; and as I am that person himself I ought to know." Immediately afterward he went to the Café Procope, just opposite the theatre, and fell asleep. "How is this?" asked a friend, coming in and waking him up. "Ought you not to see the first performance of your opera?" "I have been," said the librettist with a yawn, "but the first act was so dull that I came away when it closed. I admire the patience of these Parisians." This tendency to self-depreciation was allied to peculiar absent-mindedness, simplicity, candor and warmth of heart, though some of the stories told of him are probably exaggerated. Even the prospect of being denied a share of court favor could not deter him from doing public homage to the disgraced minister who had befriended him in early life, thereby causing the king to retard his admission to the Academy. Notwithstanding his lax

morality, he seems to have been regarded with affectionate reverence by his friends, and was always welcome to the homes of the wealthiest among them. For some years he was the permanent guest of Madame de la Sablière, who pleasantly remarked, after breaking up her establishment, that she had "kept only her cat, her dog and La Fontaine." His slight connection with the theatre was brought to a close in *Le Veau Perdu,* produced in 1693. La Fontaine died March 31, 1695, and at his own request was buried by the side of Molière.

Retirement of Thomas Corneille.

In contrast with the proverbial laziness of Lafontaine was the industry of a man of letters now on the point of seeking well-earned repose. During his long career as a dramatist, extending over more than half a century, Thomas Corneille had written thirty-seven plays, besides a new edition of *Vaugelas,* translations from Latin, and other works. He was now old, feeble and nearly blind; and in November of 1695, after writing a *Bradamanthe,* the subject of which, taken from Ariosto, hardly suited the taste of the time, he left Paris to spend the brief remainder of his life in the Andelys.

Fortunes of the Italian Troupe.

For many years the attractiveness of the Italian troupe had been steadily declining. Scaramouche, the actor so highly eulogized by Dangeau, died in 1685. He was more than eighty years of age, but is said to

have retained much of his mimetic power to the end. In order to counterbalance their loss, it would seem, his comrades began to give their pieces with a large admixture of French, if not in French altogether. The Comédie contended that this was an infringement of their privileges, and the king called upon Baron and Dominique—the harlequin of the company—to argue the point in his presence. "Sire," said the latter, when his turn came, "in what language shall I speak?" "In any language you like," replied the king. "In that case," exclaimed Dominique, "I have nothing more to say; my cause is gained." Diverted by the trick, Louis declared that he would not go from his word, and the Italians triumphantly abandoned their mother tongue on the stage. Dominique did not live very long after this incident. "Arlequin," writes Dangeau, on the 2d of August, 1688, "died to-day in Paris. Report says that he was worth three hundred thousand livres. He had been permitted to take the sacrament, having promised not to return to the theatre." Further weakened by his death, the company courted popularity by importing satirical portraits of influential personages into their plays, and by doing so completely cut the ground from beneath their feet. In the spring of 1697 they announced a novelty called *La Fausse Prude*. Madame de Maintenon, learning that its satire was directed against herself, induced the king to send them back to their native country; and the old Hôtel de Bourgogne, which may be called the cradle of French tragedy, ceased for a time to be used as a temple of the drama. Its history was, in truth, an eventful one, as will be seen by those who have

followed in the preceding pages the fortunes of this famous play-house.

Regnard's Le Distrait.

In 1697 Regnard came again before the public with *Le Distrait*, a five-act comedy in verse. The author did little more than dramatize a series of anecdotes strung together by La Bruyère in one of his *Caractères*, the absent-minded comte de Brancas. Now, a personage depending for effect upon sheer absence of mind is not, of course, very dramatic. Such a character might be set with advantage in a one-act comedy, but can hardly bear the weight of five acts constructed with a view to its development. Perceiving this, Regnard sought to make up for want of interest by lively traits of character and diverting minor incidents. He succeeded so well that, in the hands of a competent company, the play would have afforded no little amusement; but this condition, it seems, was not fulfilled at the outset, for *Le Distrait* had only four representations.

Racine's Downfall at Court.

Racine, being historiographer to the king, had bestowed much attention on public affairs, and the sufferings of his countrymen during the wars of Louis XVI excited his compassion. He communicated his ideas on the subject to Madame de Maintenon, who asked him to embody them in writing. Might not the pen which had so often moved the king in verse have a

similar effect in prose? Racine drew up a plan by which the prevailing distress might be materially alleviated. Louis, whose temper had been visibly soured by his humiliations, chanced to find his wife reading the paper. "M. Racine," he said, after looking at it, "must not imagine that because he is a great poet he ought to be a minister of state." Madame de Maintenon was required to dispense with his attendance at court until further orders, and the king, meeting him in the gallery at Versailles, passed him by without a sign of recognition. The poet felt his disgrace very keenly.

Last Days of Racine.

After his virtual expulsion from court, the health of the great dramatist steadily gave way. Neither religion nor philosophy could reconcile him to the loss of the proud position he had enjoyed there for nearly thirty years. It was in vain that the uncrowned wife of the king now and then dropped a word in his behalf. One morning, as the story goes, she met him in the gardens of Versailles, and, drawing aside into an unfrequented grove, assured him that all would yet be well. "Never, Madame," said the dispirited poet. "Have you any doubts either as to my good-will or my influence?" she asked. "I am aware of both," he replied; "but I have an aunt who thinks of me in quite a different way; every day that pious woman implores God to bestow humiliation and occasions for penitence upon me and she has more influence than you." At this point the rumbling of coach-wheels over the gra-

velled path was heard. "It is the king!" cried Madame; "quick, hide yourself." And in a moment he had disappeared in a thicket. Returning to his house in the Rue du Marais St. Germain, he was seized with a violent fever, and the internal malady which had long afflicted him assumed alarming proportions. In extreme pain, but cheered to the last by the presence and sympathy of Boileau, the staunchest of friends, he died on the 21st of April, 1699, at the age of fifty-nine.

Racine was the last of the great poets who shed lustre upon the reign of Louis Quatorze. He had given a new charm to existence, and his successor at the Academy, the erudite Valincourt, bore eloquent testimony within its walls to the pure intellectual pleasure afforded by his work. "His natural gifts as a poet," said the orator, "were seconded by an excellent education. In boyhood, captivated by the beauties of ancient poetry, he would bury himself in the woods near Port Royal to study Homer, Sophocles and Euripides, whose language became as familiar to him as his own. Before long, putting in practice what he had learned from these classic masters, he produced his first great work at an age when it is still a merit to have only read the works of others. Pierre Corneille was then in possession of the stage. The admiration he excited went to the verge of idolatry. Racine, instead of seeking to imitate a man who was deemed on all hands to be inimitable, opened out a path for himself. Contrary to the practice of Corneille, he entered, so to speak, into the spectator's heart, of which he made himself the master. He painted human nature on a less ambitious

scale than his predecessor, perhaps, but with greater truth and sensibility. In the result, the impartial public, without ceasing to admire the majesty of Corneille, began to appreciate the graces of Racine; and the French stage, rising to the height of its glory, had no longer reason to envy the achievements of the theatre of Athens. When, abandoning the profane Muses, he devoted his pen to objects more worthy of his genius, what miracles he still contrived to produce! *Esther* and *Athalie* are equal, if not superior, to *Andromaque* and *Phèdre*. I need hardly speak of the inexpressible charms of his conversation, of the brilliant imagination which made the simplest things attractive in his mouth. And who could believe that a man born with so rare a command of poetry would be a fine orator as well? It would not have been credited in Rome or Athens, but the French Academy is constantly furnishing illustrious examples of such a combination. You do not forget the force and grace with which he spoke at your meetings, especially in descanting upon the merits of the great dramatist whom he followed. To do his own merits justice I should have to borrow the flowers he scattered over the tomb of Corneille on that occasion."

Louis XIV spoke with respect of the man whom he had hurried to the grave. "You and I," he said to Boileau at their next meeting, "have suffered an appreciable loss in the death of Racine." "Sire," replied Boileau, "we have indeed, but I have the consolation of knowing that my friend died as became a true Christian, and afraid though he had always been of death, with unfaltering courage."

In many relations of private life, it must be said, Racine revealed a singular coldness of heart. Yet, by a contradiction of which literary history affords but few examples, he would be deemed exactly the reverse of this if we studied him only through the medium of his works. Here, in diction of peculiar beauty and grace, we find a warm sensibility allied to a keen sympathy with all that is most worthy of human admiration. He seems to have possessed the very spirit of pathos and tenderness.

IV.

Voltaire and His Times.

The preceding chapters have brought to a close the classic age of the French drama. It began in 1636 with the production of Pierre Corneille's masterpiece, the *Cid,* and ended in 1699 with the death of his successor, Racine. In comedy also it was rendered illustrious by Molière, who derived inspiration in tone and style from Corneille's *Le Menteur.* Around these great masters of tragedy and comedy gathered a number of followers and imitators, some of whose productions have been chronicled. The character then impressed on the French drama by the strict etiquette of a court theatre has been rigidly preserved until the present day, and even the grand revolt of the Romanticists in the early part of the nineteenth century effected but slight changes, when comparison is made with the English and German drama.

Every department of French literature in the eighteenth century is dominated by the universal genius of Voltaire.

To his dramatic works, and his so-called reformation of the stage special attention is due. But first a brief

outline of his varied career is needed for proper understanding of the remarkable man, the full embodiment of the literary spirit of France.

Born in Paris in November, 1694, the son of well-to-do parents of the middle class, he bore in youth the name François Marie Arouet. He was educated at the Jesuit college Louis le Grand, but left it at the age of sixteen to enter on the study of law, for which he had no inclination. He had mingled with the sons of families of nobility and distinction. His ambition was to shine in polite circles and enjoy the gay life of the free-livers of the Temple. His wit and facility in composing verses on themes of the day made him a favorite with great nobles, but also brought him into trouble with the authorities. For a libel on the regent he was banished from Paris in 1716, and for a satire later he was imprisoned in the Bastile for nearly a year, though not harshly treated. The time was improved in finishing his tragedy *Œdipe* and in beginning his epic on Henry IV, the *Henriade*. On his release he pursued his chosen career as the skeptical and carping critic of the religious and political traditions of his country. From his pen flowed a constant stream of occasional poems, epigrams, epistles in prose and verse, critical and historical essays and pamphlets, many of them anonymous, but all bearing the imprint of his peculiar genius. Out of his family name Arouet, with the additional letters *l. j.* (standing for *le jeune*, or junior) he formed the anagram Voltaire, by which he has since been universally known. Later he prefixed to it the aristocratic *de*. Church and State pursued him with unrelenting hos-

tility and denied most of his works the privilege of open publication in France. The various devices by which he circumvented the vigilance of the authorities form an amusing chapter in literary history. After being a second time thrown into the Bastile for resenting a nobleman's insult, he was released on condition that he retire to England.

The three years which Voltaire spent in England and the acquaintance which he thus acquired with English life, institutions, literature, and philosophy, were fruitful in the development of his ideas, though they produced no radical change in his character. He was essentially a conservative and an aristocrat. He adhered to the French literary and dramatic traditions and rules, and pronounced Shakespeare "an inspired barbarian." By association with English philosophers he acquired respect for the natural sciences and after his return to France settled at Cirey with Madame du Châtelet who had similar tastes. After her death Voltaire accepted the invitation of Frederick II of Prussia to live at his court. But the visit which commenced in 1750 with mutual congratulations and good wishes was soon marred with jealousies and rivalries, complaints and quarrels. At last the irritable genius fled from the royal hospitality, and though ignominiously arrested at the frontier on some petty charge, was permitted to leave the king's dominions. After some years of wandering Voltaire, in 1755, purchased an estate at Ferney, near Geneva, where he spent practically the rest of his life. His residence became a resort of literary men from all parts of Europe. On his estate he

built a temple with the inscription "Deo erexit Voltaire," and a theatre in which from time to time his plays were performed with the aid of actors from Geneva. In February, 1778, the patriarch of literature was invited to Paris and received a memorable ovation at the theatre at the end of March when his new tragedy of *Irene* was performed amid unbounded enthusiasm. Three months later, on the 30th of May, he died at Paris. By the contrivance of some relatives, in spite of the hostility of the Church, this arch-infidel who had devoted years of his life to the ridicule of religion, secured absolution and the Christian burial which had been denied to Molière. During the Revolution he obtained the further honor of public burial in the Pantheon.

Œdipe.

From this imperfect outline of Voltaire's biography, in which there has been no mention of his most important works, we turn to consider what he did for the French drama. His earliest tragedy, *Œdipe*, is a mixture of adherence to the Greeks—with the pretension, however, of improving on them—and of compliance with the prevailing manners. The best feature of this work Voltaire owed to Sophocles, whom he nevertheless slanders in his preface. But in comparison with the catastrophe in the ancient tragedy, that of Voltaire is flat in the extreme. Not a little, however, was borrowed from the frigid *Œdipe* of Corneille, and more especially the love of Philoctetes for Jocasta, which may be said to correspond nearly with that of Theseus and Dirce in

Corneille. Voltaire alleged in his defense the tyranny of the players, from which a young and unknown writer cannot emancipate himself. We may also notice frequent allusions to priestcraft, superstition, etc., which even at that early period betray the future direction of his mind.

In connection with his *Œdipe*, Voltaire wrote a number of letters to literary friends, partly in apology, but more in the way of criticism, comparing his *Œdipus* with those of Sophocles and Corneille. They also throw some light on the early career of the author. In one he writes, "I send you, sir, my tragedy of *Œdipus*, to the first sketch of which you were a witness, and know that I began it at the age of nineteen. If, therefore, mediocrity in writing is ever pardonable, my youth might be pleaded as an excuse. However, in spite of the defects which abound in this tragedy, and which I am the most forward to acknowledge, I flatter myself you will find it very different from the works which have been imputed to me by ignorance and malignity. I am sensible how hazardous it is to speak of oneself; but having unfortunately been accused before the public, my justification ought to be public likewise." Then follows a long-winded and querulous complaint against the abbé Regnier, whose satirical piece, *J'ai Vu*, had been attributed to Voltaire.

In another letter, which deals with the Greek drama, he advances some startling theories. "Sophocles," he says, "speaks like a declaimer, and Corneille like a poet. I am not at all surprised that Sophocles, in spite of so many imperfections, should have struck the age he

lived in with admiration. The harmony of his poetry and pathos of his style seduced the Athenians, who, with all their sense and politeness, could not form just ideas of an art which was then in its infancy.

"The rudest sketches, in the beginning of an art, affect us as much as the most finished beauties, when we are once acquainted with perfection. Thus Sophocles and Euripides, defective as they are, succeeded as well with the Athenians as Corneille and Racine have with us. Though we blame the Greek tragedies, the genius of their authors claims our respect. Their faults are those of the age they lived in; their beauties belong to themselves. And they would probably, if they had lived in our times, have carried that art to perfection, which they may be almost said to have invented in their own.

"They have fallen, it is true, from that high esteem in which they were formerly held; their works are now either unknown or looked on with contempt; which, I think, should be numbered among those acts of injustice of which our age is guilty; for they certainly deserve to be read, and if they are too defective for our approbation, they are too full of beauties to be altogether despised.

"Euripides particularly, who, in my opinion, is far superior to Sophocles, and would have been the first of poets had he lived in a more enlightened age, has left us tragedies which, in spite of their faults, discover a perfect genius.

"What idea ought we not to entertain of a poet whose sentiments are borrowed by Racine himself? The passages of Euripides, which that great man has translated

in his inimitable tragedy of *Phèdre*, are not the least beautiful of that work:

> Why am I not, ye gods! reclined beneath
> The forest's ample shade? When shall my eye
> View through the noble dust the fervid wheels
> Of his swift chariot flying in its course?
> —Unthinking as I am,
> Where am I and what words have passed my lips?
> Whither do I permit my soul to rove?
> Whither its fond desires? Alas! he's lost;
> The gods have snatched him from my sight.
> Confusion veils my face; the pangs I feel,
> My shame, my anguish, thou perceiv'st too well;
> And, spite of every struggle, down my cheek
> Thick fall unbidden tears.

"Almost this whole scene is translated word for word from Euripides. Let not the reader, however, be seduced by it to imagine the play of Euripides a good composition, for this is the only beautiful passage in his tragedy, nay, the only rational one, and indeed Racine would have imitated no other. But as we never think of praising the *Hippolytus* of Seneca, though Racine has taken all the declaration of Phædra from that author, so neither should we admire the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, on account of thirty or forty lines, which the greatest of our poets has thought deserving of imitation.

"Molière sometimes took whole scenes from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and said in excuse, 'This scene is good; it of right belongs to me; I resume my property wherever I find it,' and Racine might have said nearly the same of Euripides.

"As to myself, having said so many things to the disadvantage of Sophocles, I ought to lay before you as much as I possibly can in his favor; a part very different from that of the slanderer, who always begins with praise and ends with ridicule. I acknowledge that without the assistance of Sophocles my *Œdipus* would probably have never been completed. From him I took the idea of the first scene of my fourth act; that of the high priest who accuses the king and likewise that of the two old men are entirely his. I wish I were under further obligations to him, which I should be ready to acknowledge with the same sincerity. It is true that, as I am indebted to him for beauties, so am I also for defects, of which I shall take notice in the examination of my play; where I hope to give you an account of those which are immediately my own."

We cannot, of course, attach any weight to the criticism of a man who calls Shakespeare a barbarian, and who says of Sophocles and Euripides that their works are either unknown or looked upon with contempt. Certain it is that, after the lapse of some twenty-four centuries, the dramas of the two Greek masters are better known than those of Voltaire ever were. Yet *Œdipe* contains some remarkable passages for a youth of nineteen to have written, though probably revised in his later years. Take the third scene of the third act, where Œdipus holds converse with Philoctetes, the latter being accused of the murder of Laius, of which Œdipus is really guilty:

Œdipus.—Fear not the wild capricious multitude,

Whose voice, oh, prince! thy punishment demands.
Their tumults I have calm'd, and come prepared
Against their rage, if needful, to support thee.
They all suspect the guilty deed was thine,
For rash suspicion is the people's birthright.
But I, who judge not with the giddy vulgar,
Behold, methinks, thy innocence dispersing
This envious cloud, and dazzling e'en their eyes
With its clear lustre. Yet I must confess,
Still undetermined, my uncertain mind
Cannot acquit, nor dares it to condemn.
To heaven I bend, the gods alone must judge.
At length propitious they will seal our pardon,
And soon withdrawing their oppressive arm,
Will, by their priest's decree, announce the victim.

Philoctetes.—Unbias'd is thy equity and pure:
But justice in extreme becomes th' excess
Of injury. We should not always, prince,
Obey the voice of rigor. The prime law
Which ought to sway mankind, is that of honor.
But I am seen to the mean talk reduced
Of answering vile defamers, whom I well
Know to confound. Ah! why shouldst thou descend
To this unworthy care? To stand alone,
My own impartial witness, would suffice;
To set my life before them: Hercules,
Conqueror of Asia, firm support of heaven,
The monsters, the fierce tyrants, whom he taught
This arm to quell, these are the witnesses
With which they should confront me. But I now
Await your gods; consult their oracle,
And learn if they condemn me; nor that I
Need their assistance, and expect their judgment,
Not feeling for myself, but for thy people.

Œdipus had not as yet been denounced as the murderer of Laius. At the close of the first act he says:

Œdipus.—'Tis mine t' avenge both Laius and my people.

All must be heard, the eye must nicely scan,
To pierce the depth of this black mystery.
And you, O gods of Thebes! You gods who now
Bend listening from on high! You before whom
He stands reveal'd, oh, punish the assassin!
Hide thy pure beams forever from his eyes,
Enlightening sun! Let him, his children's horror,
His mother's execration, wandering wild,
Abandon'd, by the universal race
Of men proscribed, bear mingled in his soul
Each curse, each torture of th' infernal regions!
And may his blood-stain'd and unburied corse
Be doom'd a prey to fierce and ravenous vultures!

High Priest.—In this tremendous adjuration
We all unite.

Œdipus.—Gods! let at length the criminal alone
Feel your vindictive blow! Or if the laws
Of your eternal justice to my arm
The care of his dread punishment resign;
If, wearied with resentment stern, you cease
To persecute us still; by your command
Give freedom to obedience! If your rage
Pursues a crime, the agent undisclosed,
Finish your destined work, and name the victim.

In the last act Œdipus has confessed himself guilty, not only of murdering his father, Laius, but of marrying his wife—that is to say, his own mother, though he was not aware of his crimes when he invoked the vengeance of the gods. He still lives, but has put out his eyes with the sword that slew his father. The tragedy ends thus:

High Priest.—Inhabitants of Thebes! A happy calm
Succeeds these tempests; a serener sun
Beams o'er your heads; the pestilential fires
No longer blaze; the yawning tombs are closed;

Death flies; and heaven and earth's almighty fire
Proclaims his goodness by the voice of thunder.

(Thunder and lightning.)

Jocasta.—Why dart these flashes round me? Heaven! Where am I?
What do I hear?—Barbarians——

High Priest.— It is done.
The gods are now appeased; Laius restrains
His enmity, nor from the realms of death
Stirs up revenge against thee; to possess
The throne, to live he suffers thee; the blood
Of Œdipus hath satisfied his wrath.

Chorus.—Immortal powers!

Jocasta.— Oh, my devoted son!
Alas, and can I, dare I say my husband!
Sad, dreadful union of these dearest names!
Is he then dead?

High Priest.— He lives; but by that fate
Which still oppresses him, divided seems
Both from the dead and living; his own hands,
E'er he expires, have violated life.
I saw him thrust into his eyes the sword
Which with his father's blood was erst imbrued;
He hath fulfill'd his melancholy lot.
This destined hour gives the first sign to Thebes
Of health and safety; thus the gods decree;
Their anger rests in peace; they, at their will,
Justice or mercy deal to man below.
They have exhausted all their store of arrows
On thy unhappy son. Live thou, Jocasta—
Thee they forgive.

Jocasta.— I punish then, myself.

(Stabs herself.)

O'er-rul'd by some dire power; foredoom'd to incest
Death is my utmost wish, the only god
To be invoked by me. Laius, receive
My offered blood! Thy manes I pursue
To the dark regions of the dead; my life

Hath been to virtue sacred, and I die
Without a conscious fear.

Chorus.— Oh, hapless queen!
Oh, destiny, which strikes my soul with horror!

Jocasta.—Reserve your pity for my son alone,
For he still treads the paths of hated life.
Priests, and you, Thebans, who were once my subjects,
Honor my funeral pile; and let your minds
Bear witness ever, that oppressed by fate,
And in the midst of its encircling horrors,
I fix'd the strain of shame upon the gods,
Whose powerful impulse forced me on to crimes.

Merope.

Merope, a work of Voltaire's ripest years, appearing in 1743, was intended as a perfect revival of Greek tragedy, an undertaking of great difficulty, and was long announced with every note of preparation. Its real merit—and that a doubtful one—is the exclusion of the customary love-scenes; for in other respects it contains little of the true Grecian spirit. Moreover the confidants are entirely of the old traditional sort. If well acted, however, *Merope* rarely failed of being received with a certain degree of favor, owing to the nature of its subject. The passionate love of a mother who, in dread of losing her only treasure and threatened with cruel oppression, still supports her trials with heroic constancy, and at last triumphs over them, is altogether a picture of such truth and beauty that the sympathy it awakens is beneficent, and remains pure from every painful ingredient. Still we must not forget that the

piece belongs in a very small measure to Voltaire. How much he has borrowed from Maffei and changed—not always for the better—has been fully pointed out by Lessing.

Oreste.

Of all remodelings of Greek tragedies, *Oreste,* the latest, appears the farthest from the simplicity and severity of the antique, although it is free from any mixture of love-making, and all mere confidants are excluded. That Orestes should undertake to destroy Ægisthus is nowise singular, and seems hardly to merit such marked notice in the tragical annals of the world. It is the case which Aristotle lays down as the most indifferent, where one enemy knowingly attacks the other. And in Voltaire's play neither Orestes nor Electra have anything beyond this in view: "Clytemnestra is to be spared; no oracle consigns to her own son the execution of the punishment due to her guilt. But even the deed in question can hardly be said to be executed by Orestes himself; he goes to Ægisthus, falls, simply enough it must be owned, into the net, and is only saved by an insurrection of the people. According to the ancients, the oracle had commanded him to attack the criminals with cunning, as they had so attacked Agamemnon. This was a just retaliation, for to fall in open conflict would have been too honorable a death for Ægisthus. Voltaire has added, of his own invention, that he was also prohibited by the oracle from making himself known to his sister; and when carried away by fraternal love, he breaks this injunction, he is blinded by the

Furies, and involuntarily perpetrates the deed of matricide.

Brutus.

As the French are in general better acquainted with the Romans than the Greeks, we might expect the Roman pieces of Voltaire to be more consistent, in a political point of view, with historical truth, than his Greek pieces are with the original mythology. This is, however, the case only in *Brutus*, the earliest of them, and the only one which can be said to be sensibly planned. Voltaire sketched this tragedy in England; he had there learned from Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* the effect which the publicity of a republican episode is capable of producing on the stage, and he wished, therefore, to hold something like a middle course between Corneille and Shakespeare. The first act opens majestically; the catastrophe is brief but striking, and throughout the principles of genuine freedom are pronounced with a grave and noble eloquence. Brutus himself, his son Titus, the ambassador of the king, and the chief of the conspirators, are admirably depicted. The introduction of love into this play need not be regarded a fault, The passion of Titus for a daughter of Tarquin, which constitutes the knot, is by no means improbable, and in its tone harmonizes with the manners which are depicted. La Harpe says that Tullia, to afford a fitting counterpoise to republican virtues, ought to utter proud and heroic sentiments. By what means can a noble youth be more easily seduced than by female tenderness and modesty?

In all the so-called "theatre" of Voltaire, containing in all nearly sixty pieces, including fragments and sketches, there is perhaps none of his works that displays more clearly than *Brutus* the wonderful cleverness which he brought to the task of playing what has been aptly called "the difficult and artificial game of French tragedy." It may, indeed, be said that all his tragedies are of superior merit, while in his comedy only a single play—*Nanine*—can fairly be ranked even in the second class.

Morte de César.

The *Morte de César* is a mutilated tragedy, ending with the speech of Anthony over the dead body of Cæsar, borrowed from Shakespeare. And what a patched and bungling thing it is in all its parts! How coarse-spun and hurried is the conspiracy! How stupid Cæsar must have been, to allow the conspirators to brave him before his face without suspecting their design! That Brutus, although he knew Cæsar to be his father, nay, immediately after this fact had come to his knowledge, should lay murderous hands on him, is cruel, and at the same time most un-Roman. History affords many examples of fathers in Rome who condemned their own sons to death for crimes of state; for the law gave fathers an unlimited power. But the murder of a father, though perpetrated in the cause of liberty, would, in the eyes of the Romans, have stamped the parricide as an unnatural monster. The inconsistencies which here arise from the attempt to observe the unity of place, are obvious to every one. The scene is laid in

the Capitol; here the conspiracy is hatched in the clear light of day, and Cæsar, the while, goes in and out among them. But the persons themselves do not seem to know rightly where they are; for Cæsar on one occasion exclaims: "Let us run to the Capitol."

Catiline.

The same improprieties are repeated in *Catiline*, which is but little better than the preceding piece. From Voltaire's dramatic exhibition of a conspiracy it might be concluded that he had not himself a right understanding on this head, were it not quite evident that the French system rendered a true representation of such transactions all but impossible, not only by the required observance of the unities, but also on account of the demand for dignity of poetical expression. The latter quality was deemed quite incompatible with the accurate mention of particular circumstances, on which, as in this case, depends the truthfulness of the whole. The machinations of a conspiracy and the endeavors to frustrate them are like the underground mine and countermine, with which the besiegers and the besieged endeavor to destroy each other. Something must be done to enable the spectators to comprehend the art of the miners. If Catiline and his adherents had employed no more art and dissimulation, and Cicero no more energy and wisdom, than Voltaire has given them, the one could not have endangered Rome and the other could not have saved it. The piece turns always on the same point; they all declaim against each other, but no one acts; and

at the conclusion the affair is decided as if by accident, by the blind chance of war.

The Triumvirat.

The *Triumvirat* belongs to the acknowledged failures of Voltaire's old age. It consists of endless declamations on the subject of proscription, poorly supported by a mere show of action. Here we find the triumvirs quietly sitting in their tents on an island in the river Rhenus, while storms, earthquakes and volcanoes rage around them; and Julia, the daughter of the Cæsar that was to be, with her affianced, the young Pompeius, although they are travelling on terra firma, are depicted as if they had just been shipwrecked on the strand. And these are only a few among a number of other absurdities. Voltaire, probably by way of apology for the poor success which attended its representation, says: "This piece is perhaps in the English taste!"

To return to the earlier tragedies of Voltaire, there are several in which he brought on the stage subjects never before attempted, and on which his fame as a dramatic poet principally rests; especially *Zaire, Alzire, Mahomet, Semiramis* and *Tancred.*

Zaire.

Zaire is considered in France as the triumph of tragic poetry in the representation of love and jealousy. Lessing has asserted that Voltaire was acquainted only with the legal side of love-making; yet he often expresses

feelings with a fiery energy, if not with that familiar truth and naiveté with which an unreserved heart lays itself open. But in Zaire's cast of feeling there is no trace of Oriental coloring; educated in the seraglio, she should cling to the object of her passion with all the fervor of a maiden of glowing imagination, rioting, as it were, in the fragrant perfumes of the East. Her love, free of all fancy, dwells solely in the head; how is this conceivable with such a character? Orosman, on his part, lays claim indeed to European tenderness of feeling; but in him the Tartar is merely varnished over, and he frequently relapses into the ungovernable fury and despotic habits of his race. But all our sympathy inclines to the oppressed Christian and chivalrous side. What can be more affecting than the royal martyr Lusignan, the upright and pious Nerestan, who, though in the fire of youth, has no heart for deeds of bloody enterprise except to redeem the associates of his faith? The scenes in which these two characters appear are uniformly excellent. The idea of connecting the discovery of a daughter with her conversion can never be too much praised; but the strong effect of this act is injurious to the rest of the piece. Does any person seriously wish the union of Zaire with Orosman, except lady spectators flattered with the homage which is paid to beauty, or those of the male part of the audience who are still entangled in the follies of youth? Who else can go along with the poet, when Zaire's love for the Sultan, so ill-justified by his acts, balances in her mind the voice of blood, and the most sacred claims of filial duty, honor and religion? Though *Zaire* is commonly accepted as

Voltaire's masterpiece, it must be admitted that the love passages are somewhat strained and unnatural.

Alzire.

It was a praiseworthy act of daring, with the singular prejudices then prevailing in France, to exhibit French heroes in *Zaire*. In *Alzire* Voltaire went further, and treated a subject in modern history never yet touched by his countrymen. In the former piece he contrasted the chivalrous with the Saracenic way of thinking; in the latter we have Spaniards opposed to Peruvians. The difference between the Old and the New World has given rise to descriptions of a truly poetical nature. Though the action is purely invented, there is in this piece more of historical and symbolical truth than in most French tragedies. Zamor is a representation of the savage in his free, and Monteze in his subdued state; Guzman, of the arrogance of the conqueror, and Alvarez, of the mild influence of Christianity. Alzire remains between these conflicting elements in an affecting struggle between attachment to her country, its manners, and the first choice of her heart on the one hand, and new ties of honor and duty on the other. All the human motives which were against the passion of Zaire speak in favor of Alzire's love. The last scene, where the dying Guzman is dragged in, is almost overpowering. The noble lines on the difference of their religion, in which Zamor is converted by Guzman, are borrowed from an event in history; they are the words of the duke of Guise to a Huguenot who wished to kill

him; but the merit of the poet is not therefore less in applying them as he has done. In short, notwithstanding the improbabilities in the plot, which have often been censured, *Alzire* appears to be the most fortunate and also the most finished of all Voltaire's dramatic compositions.

Mahomet.

In *Mahomet,* want of true singleness of purpose has fearfully avenged itself on the artist. He may affirm as much as he pleases that his aim was directed solely against fanaticism; there can be no doubt that he wished to overthrow the belief in revelation altogether, and that for this object he considered every means allowable. We have thus a work which is productive of an alarmingly painful effect, equally repugnant to humanity, philosophy and religious feeling. The Mahomet of Voltaire makes two innocent young persons, a brother and sister, who, with a childlike reverence, adore him as a messenger from God, unconsciously murder their own father, and this from motives of the incestuous love in which, by his permission, they had become unconsciously entangled. The brother, after he has blindly executed his horrible mission, he rewards with poison, and the sister he reserves for the gratification of his own vile lust. This tissue of atrocities, this cold-blooded delight in wickedness, exceeds, perhaps, the measure of human nature; but, at all events, it exceeds the bounds of poetic exhibition, even though such a monster should ever have appeared in the course of ages. But further, what a disfigurement, nay, distortion, of history! He

SEMIRAMIS

After an original painting by W. de Leftwich Dodge

ARSACES. *Whom then have I slain; whose blood is this?*

ASSURUS. *Behold, wretched man, thy mother!*

SEMIRAMIS.—VOLTAIRE

has given us, moreover, none of the effect of Eastern imagery; for not a trace of Oriental coloring is to be found. Mahomet may have been a false prophet, but he was certainly one under the inspiration of enthusiasm; otherwise he could never have revolutionized half the world by his doctrines. What an absurdity to make him merely a crafty and diabolical deceiver! One alone of the many sublime maxims of the *Koran* would be sufficient to annihilate the whole of these incongruous inventions.

Semiramis.

In *Semiramis* we have a motley patchwork of French manners and mistaken imitations. It has something of *Hamlet*, and something of *Clytemnestra* and *Orestes;* but nothing of any of them as it ought to be. The passion for an unknown son is borrowed from the *Semiramis* of Crébillon. The appearance of Ninus is a mixture of the ghost in *Hamlet* and the shade of Darius in *Æschylus*. That it is superfluous has been admitted even by the French critics, and Lessing, with his raillery, has scared away the apparition. With a great many faults common to ordinary ghost-scenes, it has this peculiar one, that its speeches are dreadfully bombastic. Notwithstanding the great zeal displayed by Voltaire against subordinate love intrigues in tragedy, he has contrived to exhibit two pairs of lovers, the *partie carée* as it is called in this play, which was to be the foundation of an entirely new species. Whatever it may be that attracts the reader or spectator to the drama of Voltaire, assuredly it was not his love-

making; for this was probably his weakest point, as satire and invective were his strongest.

Tancred.

Since the *Cid* no French tragedy had appeared of which the plot was founded on such pure motives of honor and love, without any ignoble intermixtures, and so completely consecrated to the exhibition of chivalrous sentiments, as in Voltaire's *Tancred*. Améniade, though honor and life are at stake, disdains to exculpate herself by a declaration which would endanger her lover; and Tancred, though justified in esteeming her faithless, defends her in single combat, and, in despair, is about to seek a hero's death, when the unfortunate mistake is cleared up. So far the piece is irreproachable; but it is weakened by many imperfections. It is of great detriment to its perspicuity that we are not at the very first allowed to hear the letter without superscription which occasions all the embarrassment, and that it is not sent off before our eyes. The political disquisitions in the first act are extremely tedious; Tancred does not appear till the third act, though his presence is impatiently looked for, to give animation to the scene. The furious imprecations of Améniade, at the conclusion, are not in harmony with the deep but soft emotion with which we are overpowered by the reconciliation of the two lovers whose hearts, after so long a mutual misunderstanding, are reunited in the moment of separation by death. Notwithstanding its shortcomings, *Tancred* disputes with *Zaire* the claim to rank as Voltaire's chef d'œuvre,

though the latter yields to none of its class among plays where love is the leading motive.

Orphelin de la Chine.

In the earlier piece of the *Orphelin de la Chine* it might be considered pardonable if Voltaire represented the great Jenghiz-khan in love. This drama ought to be entitled *The Conquest of China*, with the conversion of the cruel khan of Tartary. Its whole interest is concentrated in two children, who are never once seen. The Chinese are represented as the most wise and virtuous of mankind, and they overflow with philosophical maxims. As Corneille, in his old age, made one and all of his characters politicians, Voltaire in like manner furnished his out with philosophy, and availed himself of them to preach his favorite opinions. He was not deterred, moreover, by the example of Corneille from publishing, when the power of representing the passions was extinct, a host of weak and faulty productions.

Voltaire a Borrower.

In common with other French dramatists, Voltaire borrowed freely, not only from his own countrymen, but from the Spaniards, the Italians and the English, not disdaining even the Chinese, as appears in the last of the works above noticed. Nor was he content to be merely a borrower, but must adapt to his own style—and that too often by no means for the better—what he had taken without acknowledgment or recognition,

while often heaping abuse on those on whom he levied tribute. His *Brutus* and *Le Morte de César* owe much to the *Julius Cæsar* of Shakespeare, as does his *Zaire* to *Othello;* and that he did not borrow more from the great English dramatist was because he understood him imperfectly. Moreover, he did not love the English overmuch, though sometimes doing them justice, as where he writes to Helvetius: "We have borrowed from the English annuities, reversible funds, sinking funds, the construction and manœuvring of ships, the laws of gravitation, the differential calculus, the seven primary colors and vaccination. Imperceptibly we shall acquire from them their noble freedom of thought and their profound contempt for the petty trifling of the schools." Truly a most liberal admission.

Voltaire's Comedies.

Though Voltaire's comedies were never highly esteemed, he has produced in several of his plays, and especially in his *Enfant Prodigue* and *Nanine*, a mixture of comedy and sentiment that is deserving of all praise. The *Enfant* was a favorite piece on the boards for two years, and on its first appearance was represented for thirty successive nights. The play opens with a scene between Rondon and Euphemon, two citizens of Cognac, Lise, the daughter of the former, being betrothed to Fierenfat, younger son of the latter. The translation is given in prose, though the original was in pentameter verse—the first French comedy written in that measure:

Rondon.—My old neighbor, my dear and melancholy friend, with what joy I shall forget your misfortune! how happy I shall be! What pleasure I promise myself in seeing my daughter re-animate your mournful family! But your son, Master Fierenfat, seems to behave in a very odd manner.

Euphemon.—How so?

Ron.—Proud of being a magistrate, he makes love by weight and measure. A young stripling of a scholar, who puts on airs of gravity, and moralizes to us like a Cato, is in my eye a mighty ridiculous animal. I had rather he had the air of a madman, than of a pedant; in short, he is too self-sufficient.

Euph.—And you are a little too blunt.

Ron.—It is my nature. I love the truth, and am pleased to hear it. I take delight, I confess, in reprimanding my son-in-law, in mortifying his conceit, and laughing at his stiff, pedantic air. You acted like a very wise father when your eldest son, that gamester, that debauchee, that wild, mad profligate went away, to give every thing to this foolish younger brother; to place all your hopes on him, and to purchase for him the presidentship of this city. O yes, that was a wise proceeding; but as soon as he became Mr. President, in good truth, he was puffed up with impertinence, his gravity must walk and talk in exact time. He even says that he has more wit than I, who, it is very well known, have a great deal more than you; he is——

Euph.—Well, but what a strange humor you are in? Must one always——

Ron.—Ah, no matter; of what consequence is it? When one has amassed a large fortune, all those defects are trifling; he is avaricious, and every miser is a prudent man. O, it is a charming vice in house-keeping! a most excellent vice. Come, he shall be my son-in-law this very day, and shall have my Lise. Nothing now remains, but to make a full assignment of all your effects, hereditary or purchased, present and future, to your son; only reserving to yourself a decent income during your life. Let everything be quickly signed and sealed, that the young gentleman your son, being well portioned, may unite an immense fortune to ours; otherwise my

daughter Lise will immediately provide herself with another husband.

Euph.—You have already, Sir, my promise, and I will perform it; yes, Fierenfat shall enjoy my whole estate. I wish to spin out the remains of a miserable life in the bosom of some calm retreat; but I should rest better satisfied if he, to whom I have given such riches, was less eager to be possessed of them. I have beheld the mad debauchery of one son; I now behold in the other a self-interested soul.

Ron.—So much the better, I say, so much the better.

Euph.—My dear friend, I was born only to be an unhappy father.

Ron.—O, you are going to entertain us with your lamentations, your sorrows, and your tiresome complaints. Do not you want your hopeful heir, that arrant rake, who is hardened in vice, to return and spoil our approaching pleasures, to disturb the hymeneal feast by his unwelcome presence?

Euph.—No.

Ron.—You want him to come, perhaps, without ceremony, and set your house on fire?

Euph.—No.

Ron.—To beat you, and carry off my daughter Lise, who was formerly promised to him; my dear Lise, who——

Euph.—May that lovely maid ever be preserved from such a profligate.

Ron.—Would you have him return to strip his father of all he is worth, to succeed to his estate?

Euph.—I shall give it all to his brother.

Ron.—Ay, or he shall never have my daughter.

Euph.—He shall have Lise, and all my fortune, this very day; and his elder brother have nothing for his inheritance, but the indignation of an injured father; he has deserved it, for he is an unnatural son.

Ron.—O, you bore with him much too long; the other, at least, conducts himself prudently; but for him, good God! what extravagant proceedings! what a libertine he was! Do you remember, ha! ha! it was a comical trick to be sure, how

he stole from you, horses, clothes, linen, furniture and plate, for the establishment of the little Jourdain, who deserted him the very next morning? I have often laughed at it, I confess.

Euph.—O what satisfaction can you have in renewing my tears!

Ron.—And then his betting twenty rouleaus upon an ace—O Lord!

Euph.—Have done, I beseech you.

Ron.—Do you recollect also, when this mad-cap was to have been betrothed, in the face of the Church, to my little Lise, in what place he had concealed himself, and for whom too?—Plague on the debauched rascal!

Euph.—Spare me, I pray, the recital of such shameful stories, which stamp his character with the blackest dye. Am I not sufficiently unfortunate? I quitted the place of my birth to save myself from uneasiness, and to remove forever from my sight every thing that might recall to my remembrance a misfortune that distracts me. Your business made you settle in this place, my friendship for you and my grief induced me to follow you; treat them with more delicacy, my good Rondon. You are always proclaiming some truth or other; and truth, let me tell you, is sometimes disagreeable.

Ron.—Well, I will say no more; let it be so; I ask your pardon. But, the deuce, you were greatly to blame, when you knew the fiery temper of your son, to make a soldier of him.

Euph.—Again!

Ron.—Pardon me; but you ought——

Euph.—I know I ought to forget everything for this new bargain we have agreed upon, for my youngest son and his marriage. But, tell me, do you think that this prudent youth has been able to gain the affections of your daughter?

Ron.—Without doubt; my daughter is a girl of honor, and obeys my supreme authority. When I say you must fall in love, her docile heart, which I can turn as I please, falls in love that very instant, without ever attempting to argue the case. I formed her young mind after my own fashion.

Euph.—I doubt, nevertheless, that her inclinations will be guided by your instructions; and I am much deceived if she

answers the pains you have bestowed upon her. My eldest son, indeed, obtained the sacrifice of the rising wishes of her inexperienced mind; I well know how strong are the first impressions of love; the heart is then tender, and does not cease bleeding in the space of one day.

Ron.—You are in your dotage surely.

Euph.—Whatever you may say, that hare-brained fellow was very capable of winning her affections.

Ron.—He! no indeed; he was one of the most insignificant of men. No, old gentleman, never fear; after those pretty tricks he played, I forbade my daughter to love him—make your mind easy on that head; when once I have said no, nobody thinks of saying yes. But here she comes, you will see how it is.

SCENE II.

Euphemon, Rondon, Lise, Martha (maid to Lise).

Ron.—Come hither, Lise; this day will be a day of great consequence to you. If I should chance to give you a husband, who is either young or old, ugly or handsome, grave or gay, rich or poor, do not you feel a desire to please him, to have an inclination, a love for him?

Lise.—No, sir.

Ron.—How, baggage!

Euph.—O ho! my liege, your authority seems to stagger a little; pray, what is become of that despotic empire you just now boasted of?

Ron.—What, after all I have said to you, will you not conceive some small affection for your future husband?

Lise.—No, sir.

Ron.—Know you not that your duty compels you to give him your whole heart?

Lise.—No, sir. I tell you, I know, sir, how far the sacred tie of marriage ought to influence a heart which is devoted to virtue. I know that a wife, amiable and prudent, should endeavor to merit the tenderness of her husband, and at least make amends, by her goodness, for the want of beauty which

fortune may have denied her; abroad, she ought to be discreet and reasonable; at home, mild, even-tempered and agreeable. With respect to love, it is quite a different affair; we cannot command our inclinations, therefore do not attempt to force them, for love flies away from slavery; everything else my husband has a right to claim, but for my heart, he must deserve it; that heart, which is rather difficult to subdue, will never be induced to love by the order of a father, by the arguments of reason or the quibbles of a lawyer.

Euph.—In my opinion this may be called a sensible manner of reasoning, and I very much approve the justice of her sentiments. My son ought to study to render himself worthy of a heart as generous as it is tender.

Ron.—Will you be silent, you flattering, complimenting dotard, you arrant corrupter of youth? But for you, my daughter, who has been properly educated, would never have dared to have uttered such nonsense in my presence. (To Lise.) Hark ye, Miss, I have procured you a husband, who, perhaps, is a little of a coxcomb, and gives himself rather too many airs; but it is my duty to correct my son-in-law, and yours to receive him, such as he is. You'll love one another, if it be possible, and be obedient to all my commands; that is the task you have to perform. And now, father-in-law, let us go to sign and seal everything at my lawyer's, who will pour forth, in a hundred superfluous words, what might be as well expressed in four. Come, let us away, to hasten his scrawling redundancies, and rattle the old, plump gentleman; that visit paid, I will return and scold your son, your daughter and yourself.

Euph.—Very well, sir. I attend you.

SCENE III.

Lise, Martha.

Martha.—Bless us! how he joins to his grotesque figure the most comical ideas and manner of acting.

Lise.—I am his daughter, and the strangeness of his humor does not in the least affect the goodness of his heart. Under

the severity of a knitted brow and rough outside, he still has the soul of a father; nay, sometimes even in the midst of his harangue, whilst he is scolding me, he yields to my advice; to be sure, when he blames the person and faults of the husband he has provided for me, and shows me all the dangers of such a union, he is very much in the right; but when afterward he commands me to love him, my God! how I feel he is greatly in the wrong.

Martha.—How is it possible to love such a one as Monsieur Fierenfat? I would sooner marry an old soldier, who swears, drinks, beats his wife, and yet loves her, than a puppy of the long robe, enraptured with himself, who, with a voice of gravity and pedantic air, seems as if he were passing sentence on his wife whenever he speaks to her; who, bridling under his band, surveys himself like a peacock with admiration; and who, still more covetous than conceited, makes love to you while he is reckoning up his money.

Lise.—O, your pencil has painted him to the very life; but what can I do in this case? I must submit to have my inclinations forced in his approaching marriage; we cannot dispose of our destiny to our own liking; my relations, my fortune, my age, all unite to urge me into matrimonial bondage. This Fierenfat, notwithstanding my disgust of him, is the only one here who can well be my husband; he is the son of my father's best friend; the match is absolutely become necessary. Alas! what heart can now, unrestrained, sigh and dispose of itself according to its natural impulse? I must yield; time and patience will perhaps get the better of my aversion to my husband, and, submissive to the yoke, I may at last become as indulgent to his faults as to my own.

Martha.—Very wisely spoken, my fair and prudent mistress; but you rather disguise the real sentiments of your heart. If I were permitted—but you have ordered me never to mention the elder brother.

Lise.—How!

Martha.—Euphemon, who, with all his vices, obtained sacrifice of your maiden affections; he also loved you.

Lise.—He never loved me; let me no more hear his detested name.

Martha.—(Going away.) Well, we will talk no more of him.

Lise.—(Detaining her.) That youth, indeed, surprised me into a tenderness for him; but was he calculated for a virtuous mind?

Martha.—(Going.) He was a madman, very dangerous, upon my word.

Lise.—(Detaining her.) Surrounded, when young, by corrupters of every sort, he rushed headlong, unthinkingly, into every excess. Wretch that he was! he sought variety of pleasures, but knew not what was meant by love.

Martha.—Yet you once seemed to imagine that he placed his whole glory in adoring you, and, as a captive, wore your chains.

Lise.—If his passion had been real, I could have reformed him; a sincere affection, without caprice or disguise, is, in fact, the surest curb on vice; he who can be restrained by such a tie is an honest man, or will soon become so; but Euphemon disdained the control of his mistress, and quitted her tenderness for debauchery; those false friends, those indigent villains, who led him into the snare after having consumed his mother's property, robbed in his name his unfortunate father; to complete the whole, those infamous seducers dragged him far away from the arms of his father, from these eyes, which, drowned in tears, still wept for his vices and his charms. I am now no longer interested for him.

Martha.—His brother, at length, is appointed his successor, and is to marry you. Faith it is pity; for the other had a handsome face, fair hair and a well shaped leg, danced, sung—in short, was born for love.

Lise.—Ah! what is that you say?

Martha.—Even in his wildest moments, in the midst of his follies and dissipations, one might easily discover, under the veil of those defects, a certain fund of honor in his breast.

Lise.—He surely was by nature formed for virtue.

Martha.—Do not suppose, Madame, that I am praising him; but he appeared to be neither a flatterer, a railer, a sharper, nor a liar.

Lise.—No, but——

Martha.—Let us be gone; here comes his brother.

Lise.—We must stay; it is a necessary evil.

SCENE IV.

Lise, Martha, Fierenfat.

Fierenfat.—I confess, Madame, that this increase of fortune will greatly augment the satisfaction you will have in such a marriage; an accession of wealth is the very soul of housekeeping. I think I may say without vanity that I possess fortune, honors and dignities; and throughout the whole territory of Cognac, Madame, you will be entitled to the honor of precedency among the first ladies of the beau monde, a pleasure, I assure you, not a little flattering; you will hear them whispering, one to another, that is Madame la Presidente. Indeed, when I take a survey of my rank, my estate, the privileges of my office, and my agreeable situation in life, together with the right of seniority, which will be assigned to me, I cannot help, Madame, congratulating you on the occasion.

Martha.—For my part, I pity her. It is a scandalous thing that you must, on every occasion, interlard your discourse with your good qualities, your rank and your fortune; to be at once a Midas and a Narcissus; puffed up with self-conceit and pinched with avarice; always surveying, with an eye of satisfaction, both your person and your money; a covetous petit maitre with a band on, the most uncommon, ridiculous character imaginable; a young coxcomb may be endured, but a young miser, in my opinion, is a monster.

Fier.—It is not probably to you, honey, that my father intends to marry me to-day, but to this lady; therefore, if you please, do not interest yourself quite so much in our affairs; silence will best become you. (To Lise.) For you, Madame, who in an hour or two will be my wife, I hope you will have the goodness to discharge, before night, this brazen faced champion of yours, who under the title of a chambermaid, gives full scope to her impertinence. I am not a president for nothing, I assure you, and may chance to get her lock'd up for her own benefit.

Martha.—(To Lise.) Save me, Madame, speak to him, speak boldly. I am your servant, don't let him lock me up; who knows but he may lock you up too?

Lise.—I prophesy no good from all this. (Aside.))

Martha.—Speak to him, then, and leave off muttering to no purpose.

Lise.—Alas! what can I say to him?

Martha.—Abuse him.

Lise.—No; reason will have a better effect.

Martha.—No reasoning; believe me, it is the surest way—

SCENE V.

Lise, Martha, Fierenfat, Rondon.

Rondon.—A very pleasant adventure, forsooth.

Fierenfat.—Why, what's the matter, sir?

Ron.—I will tell you. I was going to carry the writings to the old gentleman, your father, when I met him hard by here, at the foot of that rock, conversing with a traveller, who had just alighted from a coach.

Lise.—Was it a young traveller?

Ron.—No, truly; he was an old, wrinkled, toothless fellow, on crutches. I saw the two superannuated beings rubbing their beards together; their hump-backs rose and fell to the tune of their long-winded sighs, and their noses were bewetted with the tears that distilled from their gummy eyes; at last Euphemon, with a screwed-up face, suddenly retired to his own house; he told me that he was uncommonly afflicted, that he must at least cry for some minutes before he could sign the deeds, and desired that nobody would pretend to speak to him.

Fier.—O, I shall go myself and console him; all of you know how I can manage him; indeed the affairs concern me nearly. I am well acquainted with his disposition; the moment he sees me, with the contract in my hand, he will sign it. But time is precious, and my new right of seniority is an object worthy of attention.

Lise.—There is no occasion to be in such a hurry, sir.

Ron.—Yes, there is occasion, Madame; all this is owing to you.

Lise.—How, sir? To me!

Ron.—Yes, Madame, to you; all the crosses and disappointments which disturb the peace of families, proceed from disobedient daughters.

Lise.—What have I done, sir, to make you so angry?

Ron.—You have done—you have thrown us all into confusion; but I will go and find out these two Marplots, and beat a little sense through their thick skulls. I am resolved you shall be married immediately in spite of their teeth; nay, in spite of yourself, if I like it.

Thus ends the first act. In those which follow there is too much moralizing—a fault all too common with Voltaire; but in the two last acts, where the elder son of Euphemon, having returned home, makes himself known to Lise and his father, there are touches of true pathos. To Lise he declares that he has reformed; that "vice, though pursued, was an alien to his heart." She interrupts his confession by asking: "And does Euphemon still love me?" "Do I love you?" he replies, "Alas! through love alone I have existed; that only has sustained me. I have suffered many things, even to infamy, and my hand was a hundred times ready to cut short the thread of my life, but I cherished my being because it was your property. Yes, to you I am indebted for my present sentiments, for my existence, and that new course of life which perhaps will shine propitious on me; to you I am indebted for the return of reason, if, indeed, it is possible to preserve it with a love like mine." Asked whether he has not seen his

father yet, young Euphemon replies: "I blush to show my guilty face to that good old man, whom I have disgraced. Detested by him, and banished without hope, I dare to love him, but I fly his presence."

Lise.—What, then, are your intentions?

Young Euphemon.—If heaven prolongs the period of my days, and if it is your destiny to be united with my brother, I shall change my name, as well as my condition, serve as a soldier, and seek an honorable death on the field of battle.

Lise.—This desperation proceeds from a noble mind, from a heart that is superior to its follies. Such sentiments affect me more sensibly than the tears you have showered down at my feet. No, Euphemon, if I can dispose of myself, if I can any way escape the marriage which is proposed to me, and can possibly have the direction of your fortune, you shall not go so far to make an alteration in it.

In the final act there is a reconciliation quite in the manner of the prodigal son, for which Lise has paved the way.

Euphemon.—I loved my son; let these tears bear witness of it. O, if he still exists! if he is a convert to virtue! Explain yourself, Madame, speak to me.

Lise.—I will, sir; it is now time that you should be satisfied. (She steps aside and speaks to young Euphemon, who is behind the scene.) Come forth!

Euphemon.—Heavens! what do I see?

Young Euphemon.—(Kneeling.) O my father! acknowledge me; decide my fate; one word determines me to wish for life or death.

Euph.—Ah! What brings you here at this juncture?

Young Euph.—Repentance, love and nature.

Lise.—(Kneeling with him.) Behold your children at your feet. Yes, sir, our sentiments and our hearts are the same.

Young Euph.—(Pointing to Lise.) Alas! her kind indulgence has pardoned the extravagance of my offenses; follow, sir, in favor of an unfortunate wretch, the blessed example which love has given you; my only hopes, in the height of my misery, were to die beloved by you and her; and O, if I live, it will be to merit that affection with which I dare to flatter myself. You turn away your eye from a poor unfortunate! What panic agitates your soul? Is it hatred? and must your son be condemned.

Euph.—(Raising him up and embracing him). It is tenderness. All, all is forgiven thee. If virtue is at length triumphant in thy breast, I am still thy father.

Lise.—And I his wife. O sir, I was once promised to him; permit us at your feet to ratify our first engagement; it is not, sir, your fortune which he requires; no, he presents you with a heart too pure for such requisition; he desires nothing; if he is virtuous, all I have will be sufficient for us both.

Rondon and Fierenfat now appear on the scene.

Fierenfat.—Ah! there he is, still talking to Lise; let us boldly take our gentleman by surprise; let us show a courage above the common pitch.

Rondon.—Let us be resolute; we are six to one.

Lise.—(To Rondon.) Open your eyes, sir, and know who it is I love.

Ron.—It is he.

Fier.—Who?

Lise.—Your brother, sir.

Euphemon.—The very same.

Fier.—You are jesting, I believe; what, this rascal my brother?

Lise.—Yes, sir.

Ron.—What a change! That is my young spark, is it?

Fier.—Oh, oh, I play a very comical part here. God bless me, what a brother!

Euph.—Yes, sir. I had lost him, but repentance and Heaven have restored him to me.

Fier.—What a villainous heart he must have, to come back only to take away my wife from me.

Young Euph.—(To Fierenfat.) It is at length necessary that you should know me. It is you, sir, who were going to deprive me of her. There was a time when I possessed her affections; but the extravagance of unbridled youth deprived me of a treasure of the highest estimation, and of which I knew not the value; on this propitious day I have found again my integrity, my mistress and my father. Do you envy me because the rights of blood and the rights of love are unexpectedly restored to me? Take my fortune, I give it up to you; you love money, and I her person; thus we shall both be completely happy, you in my estate and I in the possession of her heart.

Euph.—Such disinterested goodness shall never be so ill rewarded; no, Euphemon, thy father does not choose to present thee to her without any estate or settlement.

Lise.—(To Rondon.) And you, my dear father, permit, I entreat you, that my sincere and faithful heart, which never can dispose of itself but once, may return to its first allegiance.

Ron.—If, indeed, he is less hare-brained, and——

Lise.—O, I will be answerable for it.

Ron.—If he loves you; if he is prudent——

Lise.—Have no doubt about it.

Ron.—If, above all, Euphemon will make him a present of a handsome settlement—I will give my consent.

Fier.—I certainly gain a great deal by finding this brother of mine; but, nevertheless, I lose in a moment my wedding expenses, my fortune and my wife.

Universality of Voltaire's Genius.

It cannot even be claimed for Voltaire that he was ever a dramatic poet in the same sense as were Corneille

and Racine. The former tragic master led a truly artistic life; his whole soul was wrapped up in his work, and all his studies and desires were directed to the stage alone. In a measure the same is true of Racine, though a mistaken sense of religious duty did succeed in withdrawing him for many years from active work for the stage. Voltaire, on the contrary, with his universal genius, must shine in every department of literature, and a restless vanity never permitted him to be content with striving after perfection in any single branch. In tragedy he attempted to excel even those whom he declared to have surpassed the choicest works of the Attic muse; nor is it wonderful that his dramatic aspirations were the least successful of all his many-sided efforts after fame. From the variety of subjects on which his mind was employed, it was impossible for him to avoid occasional shallowness and immaturity of ideas. To form a correct estimate of his relation to his two great predecessors in the tragic art, we must compare the characteristic features of the preceding classic age and of that to which he gave the tone. In the time of Louis XIV a certain traditionary code of opinions on all the most important concerns of humanity reigned in full force and unquestioned. Even in poetry, the object was not so much to enrich as to form the mind, by a liberal and noble entertainment. But, finally, the want of original thinking began to be felt, and it unfortunately happened that presumption went far in advance of inquiry. Hence the spread of public immorality was quickly followed by a dangerous, scoffing skepticism, which shook to the foundation every religious

and moral conviction, and the very principles of society itself.

Voltaire was by turns philosopher, rhetorician, sophist and buffoon. The want of singleness, which more or less characterized all his views, was irreconcilable with complete freedom from prejudice, even as an artist in his career. As he saw the public longing for information, which was rather tolerated by the favor of the great than authorized and formally approved by appropriate public institutions, he did not fail to meet their want, and to deliver, in beautiful verses, on the stage, what no man dared yet preach from the pulpit or the professor's chair. He made use of poetry as a means to accomplish ends alien to its nature. Thus the artistic purity of his compositions was often impaired. As an example, it may be noted that the real aim of his *Mahomet* was to portray the dangers of fanaticism, or rather, indeed, of any belief in revelation. For this purpose he has most unjustifiably disfigured a great historical character, revoltingly loading him with frightful enormities, which rack and torture our feelings. Universally known, as he was, to be the bitter enemy of Christianity, he bethought himself of a new triumph for his vanity; in *Zaire* and *Alzire* he had recourse to Christian sentiments to excite emotion, and here, for once, his heart, which in its momentary transports was susceptible of good feelings, overcame the rooted malice of his understanding; he succeeded, and these affecting religious passages cry out loudly against the slanderous levity of his petulant misrepresentations. Voltaire was never consistent, and least of all in his dramas, scoffing

at a religion whose sentiments he did not hesitate to use for dramatic effect.

Changes Due to Voltaire.

In England Voltaire had acquired a knowledge of a free constitution and became an enthusiastic admirer of liberty. Corneille had introduced Roman republicanism and general politics into his works, for the sake of their poetical energy. Voltaire again exhibited them under a poetical form, because of the political effect he thought them calculated to produce on popular opinion. As he fancied, he was better acquainted with the Greeks than his predecessors, and as he had obtained a slight knowledge of the English theatre and Shakespeare, which were then unknown to France, he wished in like manner to use them to his own advantage. He insisted on the earnestness, the severity and the simplicity of the Greek dramatic representation, and so far, at least, approached them as to exclude love from various subjects to which it did not properly belong. He was desirous of reviving the majesty of the Grecian scenery, and here his endeavors had, at least, the effect that in theatrical representation, the eye was no longer so utterly neglected as it had been. He borrowed from Shakespeare, as he thought, bold strokes of theatrical effect; but in this he was not successful; for when, in imitation of that great master, he ventured in *Semiramis* to call up a ghost from the lower world, he fell into innumerable absurdities. In a word, he was perpetually making experiments with dramatic art, con-

stantly availing himself of some new device. Many of his works seem to have stopped half way between studies and finished productions; for there is a trace of something unsettled and incomplete in his whole mental formation. Corneille and Racine, within the limits which they set themselves, are much more perfect; they are altogether that which they are, and we have no glimpses in their works of any supposed higher object beyond them. Voltaire's pretensions are much more extensive than his means. Corneille has expressed the maxims of heroism with greater sublimity, and Racine the natural emotions with a sweeter gracefulness; while Voltaire, it must be allowed, has employed the moral motives with greater effect, and displayed a more intimate acquaintance with the primary and fundamental principles of the human mind.

Voltaire's Treatment of the Unities.

What was this great dramatic critic's actual practice in regard to the unities of time and place, which are so prominent in the canons of the French drama? It must be acknowledged that, while sturdily professing to observe their spirit, he did not hesitate to infringe on their strict rules. He tried to adapt them to modern conditions, though often with very confused ideas of propriety. In his *Semiramis* he attempted to carry the rules into practice, and yet succeeded only in producing utter absurdity. Instead of allowing the persons to proceed to various places, he actually preserves unity of place by bringing the places to the persons. In the third

act the scene is a cabinet, and to use Voltaire's own words, "this cabinet, with the queen still within it, is suddenly transformed into a grand salon, magnificently furnished." The mausoleum of Ninus, also, which at first stands in an open place before the palace, opposite the temple of the Magi, manages to steal to the side of the throne in the centre of the hall. After yielding the spirit of the departed monarch to the light of day, to the terror of many beholders, the tomb receives it back, and in the following act returns to its old place, where it has left its obelisks behind. The effect had been further impaired by the custom of giving seats on both sides of the stage to distinguished personages, sometimes leaving a space barely ten feet wide for the movements of the actors.

Voltaire's Reforms.

As the action of Greek tragedies was always carried on in open places, surrounded by the abode or symbols of majesty, the French poets modified their materials to the manners of modern courts. Within the walls of a princely palace, no display of strong emotion, no breach of social etiquette was permitted; and as these are inseparable from tragedy, every bold deed, every act of violence, everything startling and calculated strongly to impress the senses, must be transacted behind the scenes, and related merely by messengers or confidants. Voltaire was fully conscious of the injury to dramatic effect sustained by this established custom of the tragic stage. Herein was one of his reforms; for he represented many things upon the stage which be-

fore would have been considered as unsuitable, if not ridiculous. Decorations also were greatly enriched and in better taste, the fripperies of Louis Quatorze fashion following the fops who had so long encumbered the scenes.

In other respects too close an observance of Greek rules, while the drama was under an entire change of conditions, had given rise to many incongruities. While the scene was not changed, things which could not happen in the same place were made to follow each other. What could be more improbable, for example, than that conspirators should confide their secrets to one another in a place where they knew their enemies were close at hand, or that plots against a sovereign should be hatched in his own antechamber? Unfortunately, Voltaire was too late to effect the complete revolution which he had projected; for much had already been ruined by the trammels of the drama and the prejudice in favor of external rules and proprieties.

As French tragedy had been developed from the time of Richelieu, so far from combining poetic form with nature and truth, it seemed to place us in the atmosphere of a court, as though this were essential to the existence of human nature. In real tragedy men are either matched with men in fearful strife, or set in close struggle with misfortune, and we can only exact from them an ideal dignity, without requiring the nice observance of social punctilios. The deepest emotions cannot be reached; for the poet must not exhibit human nature in all its repulsive nakedness. The most heart-rending pictures must still possess a certain beauty and

dignity beyond the realities of actual life, and it is precisely this beauty which is demanded in a French tragedy, however incompatible with perfect truth of expression.

A serious drawback lies in the national tendency of the Frenchman always to exhibit himself to the greatest possible advantage, and never to forget himself in the presence of others. In French tragedy the author protrudes too much of his own individuality into the discourses of his various personages, communicating to them his own reflections and his desire to shine on all occasions. When tragical speeches are closely examined, they are rarely found to be such as would be delivered by persons speaking or acting by themselves, apart from all restraint. We never overhear them in their unguarded moments, when they imagine themselves alone, and throw aside all care and reserve

Eloquence.

Eloquence is, of course, perfectly in place in tragedy, but only when the speaker is perfectly master of himself; since for overpowering passion an unconscious and involuntary eloquence alone is suitable. The truly inspired orator always forgets himself in his subject, and when he thinks less of his subject than of himself, and of the art of which he is a master, his oratory degenerates into rhetoric. Of rhetoric in court dress we have altogether too much in French tragedies, and in none more so than in the works of Pierre Corneille. Whenever a tragic hero can express his pain in antithesis and

allusion, we may reserve our pity, for we can be sure his sufferings have not reached the inmost heart. It is on account of this parade in situations which call for complete self-forgetfulness that Schiller has compared the heroes in French tragedy to the kings in old engravings, who lie in bed, crown, sceptre, robes and all.

Voltaire's Dread of Ridicule.

The social refinement which prevails in all French literature and art sharpens the sense of the ludicrous, which carried to excess, as in Paris, is the death of all enthusiasm. The fear of ridicule is the conscience of French poets; it has clipped their wings and impaired their flight; for it is always in the serious kinds of poetry that this fear torments them most. Extremes run into one another, and whenever pathos fails it is sure to give rise to laughter and parody. Corneille was not thus afflicted, for the Parisians of his time had not the wit of the moderns. Racine, with his natural refinement and moderation, was fairly guarded against the danger; but it is pitiful to witness the agony of Voltaire when threatened with a parody of his *Semiramis*. In a petition to the queen, this man, whose whole life had been passed in turning into ridicule everything great and venerable, urges his position as one of the servants of the king's household as a ground for obtaining from high authority the prohibition of a perfectly innocent and legitimate source of amusement. Since French wits have so long indulged themselves with turning into ridicule all things on earth, and especially the mental pro-

ductions of other nations, it is but fair that we should divert ourselves at the expense of their tragic writers, when they have now and then split on the rock of which they were themselves most in dread.

Preliminary Expositions.

The expositions or statements of the preliminary situation of things were another fault of the Parisian stage. They generally consist of choicely worded disclosures to the confidants, delivered in a happy moment of leisure. The very public whose impatience keeps the poets and players under such strict discipline has patience enough to listen to the prolix unfolding of what ought to be sensibly developed before their eyes. It is allowed that an exposition is seldom unexceptionable; that in their speeches the persons usually begin further back than they should, and that they tell one another what they must both have known before.

The whole system of exposition, both in tragedy and high comedy, is exceedingly erroneous. Nothing can be more ill-judged than to begin at once to instruct us without any dramatic movement. At the first drawing up of the curtain the spectator's attention is almost unavoidably distracted by external circumstances, his interest has not yet been excited, and this is precisely the time chosen by the poet to require his undivided attention to a dry explanation—a demand which he can hardly be ready to meet. It may be urged that the same thing was done by the Greek poets. But with them the subject was for the most part extremely sim-

ple, and already known to the spectators; and their expositions, with the exception of the unskillful prologues of Euripides, have not the didactic particularizing tone of the French, but are full of life and motion. How admirable, again, are the expositions of Shakespeare and Calderon! At the very outset they lay hold of the imagination, and when they have once gained the spectator's interest and sympathy, they then bring forward the information necessary for the full understanding of the implied transactions.

To sum up in a few words, the French have endeavored to form their tragedy according to a strict idea; but instead of this they have set up merely an abstract notion. They require tragical dignity and grandeur, tragical situations, passions and pathos, altogether simple and pure, and without any foreign appendages. Stripped of their proper investiture, they lose much in truth, profundity and character; and the whole composition is deprived of the living charm of variety, of the magic of picturesque situations, and of all those pleasing effects which a light but preparatory matter, when left to itself, often produces on the mind by its spontaneous growth.

The Influence of Voltaire.

The great literary despot of the eighteenth century claimed that his dramatic reforms and innovations had imparted new vitality to French tragedy. He even succeeded in convincing his contemporaries of the justice of such claims. Yet, in fact, he made no essential im-

provement in the art; rather, indeed, he increased the tendency to mere declamation, which is fatal to the highest drama. The leading ideas in his plays are political or social; they abound in invectives against tyranny and exposure to fanaticism. It is true that his genius was in no way circumscribed by national prejudice in regard to the subjects treated. He took his themes from a very wide historical and geographical range—from the New World as well as the Old, from Egypt and China, from the Crusades or ancient Roman and Greek history as well as from French annals. He crossed the Channel and borrowed from Shakespeare, and deliberately attempted to improve him, besides pointing out his supposed faults in critical essays. But where French tragedy was really weak—that is, in presentation of character—Voltaire made no improvement. He never rose to the force and passion of Corneille; he never equalled Racine in grace. In spite of the searching criticism of two centuries, these two masters still hold the foremost place in the French theatre, while the dramatic works of Voltaire have been almost consigned to oblivion.

V.

Voltaire's Contemporaries.

In Voltaire's long literary career he was an interpreter and to some extent the guide and director of the general movement of the French mind. In its early part he was merely a man of letters delighting in the exuberance of his powers, treating airily or seriously themes suggested by the course of events. In its latter part, roused by the hostility, open and covert, with which he was surrounded and tormented, he became more distinctly a social critic and reformer, using his unmatched powers of literary expression to promote his ends, sometimes selfish, but just as often humanitarian. Above all, his work was a warfare against intolerance and in behalf of free thoughts. He had numerous literary followers and imitators, and a few real, with many would-be rivals.

Crébillon.

In the dramatic field Crébillon was Voltaire's most prominent rival; yet, though he confined his efforts to this single department, he did not attain this position until well advanced in life, and then rather through

the ardor of the enemies of the great skeptic than through the real merit of his own productions.

Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon was twenty years older than Voltaire, having been born in 1674 at Dijon, where his father was a notary royal. He was educated at the Collège Mazarin, and being destined for the bar, was placed in an attorney's office at Paris. But his preceptor, who had been a friend of Scarron, urged the young man, who had a turn for rhyming, to try the theatre. His first tragedy on the death of the sons of Brutus was not brought out, but his second, *Idomenée*, presented in 1705, had sufficient success to encourage him to proceed. His *Atrée et Thyeste* was repeatedly acted at court, and in 1711 he produced his masterpiece, *Rhadamiste et Zenobie*. But later ventures were failures. He was poor and met with various misfortunes, which soured his spirit without diminishing his pride and self-conceit. His enthusiasm for ancient republicanism might have given him a prominent place in a revolutionary era, but it was a clog to him in monarchical France. Having lost his wife, he removed with his infant son to a garret, where he shared his home with cats and dogs, and solaced himself as best he could. Yet he had some ardent partisans, and there came a turn in his fortunes when, in 1731, he secured election to the Academy. Madame de Pompadour, in her enmity to Voltaire, favored Crébillon's ambition. He obtained a position in the royal library and a pension. In 1748 his *Catilina* was played before the court with great success. His last play, *Le Triumvirat*, was presented in 1754. His life was prolonged till his eighty-eighth year.

So fierce was Voltaire's jealousy that he took the subjects of no less than five of Crébillon's tragedies for dramas of his own. Crébillon was noted for vigor and passion, but his lack of culture was manifested in his best plays. Far from contributing to the purification of the tragic art, as his friends claimed, he followed in the footsteps of the more affected writers of his age. His favorite books were the antiquated romances of Calprenède and similar writers, and from them he derived his extravagant plots. Though his talents were suited only for tragedy, they were not sufficient for its loftiest flights. He was at his best in poetic depictions of terror, and was, therefore, called "the terrible," but good taste would condemn him as sensational, both in action and diction. He painted passion more than character and situation more than passion.

Crébillon's Electre.

The *Electre* of Crébillon appeared in 1708. It has undoubtedly great defects; the author did not attempt to retain the ancient simplicity; he introduces false and insipid elements—the double love of the children of Ægisthus and Agamemnon—into the most tragic subject in the world. But *Electre* has also its beauties; for instance, the dream of Clytemnestra:

Twice I awoke from distressing slumber—for the third time my senses sunk in sleep—when I thought that I felt myself dragged, amid terrible and mournful cries, into the horror of darkness. I followed, in spite of myself, these doleful shrieks. I cannot tell what remorse agitated my mind. A

thousand thunders roared in a thick cloud, which, however, appeared to yield to me a passage. Under my wavering steps a gulf was opened, and the frightful abode of the dead was presented to my eyes. Across Acheron the unhappy Electra, at a great pace, seemed to guide a spectre to the place where I was. I fled—it followed me. Ah! my lord, at that name my blood freezes. Alas! it was Agamemnon. "Stop," he said to me with a fearful voice, "this is the dreadful termination of thy crimes! Stop, unworthy spouse, and shudder at that blood which the cruel Ægisthus drew from my side!" That blood, which streamed from a large wound, appeared, as it flowed, to send forth a long murmur. On the instant I thought I saw mine run also; but, wretch that I am, scarcely did it touch his when I saw spring from it a pitiless monster, which first darted at me a frightful look. Twice the Styx, struck by its bellowings, answered with prolonged groans.

The meeting of Orestes and Electra is full of fire; the part of Palamedes, entirely the invention of Crébillon, is powerfully conceived and executed, and the remorse of Orestes forms an admirable passage, somewhat in the style of Racine in *Andromaque*. We meet there with a stroke of genius; Orestes lets his own name escape his lips, and, in his fearful trouble, takes it for a voice that came from hell:

But how! what vapor now obscures the air? Thanks to heaven, the road to hell is open, let us descend; hell has nothing to frighten me; let us follow the dark path which destiny presents to me; let us conceal ourselves in the horrors of eternal night. What a mournful brightness at this moment lights my way! Who brings day into these gloomy retreats? What do I see—my look frightens the spirits of the dead! What groanings! what doleful cries! Orestes! Who calls me n this horrid abode—Ægisthus? Ah! it is too much; . . . What do I see? in his hands my mother's head! What looks! whither shall I flee? Ah! furious monster, what a spectacle dost thou dare present to my eyes! Cruel monster, stop! take

this head away from my eyes, overwhelmed with terror! Ah! my mother, spare your unhappy son! Shade of Agamemnon, listen to my cries! I implore thy aid, dear shade of my father! Come, defend thy son from his mother's fury! Take pity on the condition to which thou seest me reduced! What! the barbarous woman follows me, even into thy arms! It is done; I yield to this frightful punishment.

Rhadamiste.

Rhadamiste is much superior to the other works of Crébillon. Had this tragedy been better written, it would have occupied a foremost rank on the French stage. Yet something is always wanting to it, and especially good sense—not precisely on the stage, but in the distribution of the piece. Aristotle allows absurdity in the events previous to the action of the play; Crébillon has made large use of this permission. Nothing can be more absurd than the facts related in the explanation, which is made twice over, in the first and second acts, always in a dull, complicated and confused manner. But the points of interest which result from these painful antecedents are worthy of note. Rhadamistus thus discourses to his confidant, Hieron:

And what do I know, Hieron? Furious, wavering, a criminal without inclination, and virtuous without intention—unfortunate sport of my extreme grief—in my present condition do I know myself? My heart, incessantly assailed by different cares, and an enemy of crime, without loving virtue—deplorable victim of an unfortunate love—is abandoned to remorse without renouncing crime. I yield to repentance, but without profiting by it, and my self-knowledge leads me only to detest myself. Do I know what draws me into this cruel abode—is it despair, or love, or hatred? I have lost Zenobia: after that

horrid blow, can you still ask me what I wish? Desperate, proscribed, abhorring the light, I would wish to avenge myself on all nature! I know not what poison pervades my heart, but, even in my remorse, everything there becomes fury.

The dialogue between Pharasmenes and his son, Rhadamistus, who, without making himself known, is presented as ambassador of the Romans, is admirable. The energy of the style and the power of fancy are suitable to the thought. Still better is the meeting of Rhadamistus and his wife Zenobia, whom he thought he had sacrificed, the latter exclaiming:

Ah! cruel one! would that thy hostile hand had never attempted any other life than that of Zenobia! With my heart divested of anger by thy look, I would make it my happiness to see my husband again, and love, honored by thy jealous fury, would have placed thy wife in thy arms. Think not, however, that I can look on thee with enmity or without pity. . . . Go, it is not to us that the gods have committed the power of punishing enemies so dear. Mention to me the country where thou wishest to live. Speak! from this moment I am ready to follow thee, assured that the remorse, which has taken possession of thy heart, springs from thy virtue more than from thy misfortune. Happy, if the cares of Zenobia for thee might one day serve as an example to Armenia—to render the people like me submissive to thee, and, at least, to instruct them how to discharge their duty. . . . Calm the vain suspicions which have arisen in thy mind, or conceal, at least, from me thy unworthy jealousy—remember that a heart which can pardon thee cannot be suspected without a crime.

Rhadamistus, overwhelmed with this generosity, exclaims: "Ye gods, you have restored her to me, fulfill

my desires and condescend to make my heart worthy of your benefits."

In the fourth act, forced by the jealousy of Rhadamistus, Zenobia, in the presence of his brother Arsaames, confesses her feelings in favor of the latter, which she had concealed till then: "But since thou wishest to give thyself up to thy suspicions, know then all in this heart, which thou canst suspect; I am about by a single stroke to make thee acquainted with it, and afterward leave thee master of my destiny. Thy brother was dear to me, I cannot deny it; nay, I do not even seek to justify it; but in spite of his love, that prince, who was ignorant of my partiality, would not yet have known it, but for thy ungenerous suspicions." She concludes, as she turns away: "I know the rage of thy jealous suspicions, but I have too much virtue to be afraid of my husband."

Pyrrhus.

Crébillon's *Pyrrhus* was esteemed below its real value. The subject is interesting and extremely probable; its structure is skillful and yet simple, the characters are noble and interesting. Here we find some traces of Corneille—the exhibition of generosity in youthful hearts—a trait of nature, which both poets knew how to represent. Although this play is better written than the rest, it still wants the charm of style which might have secured for it enduring reputation; for Crébillon, with all his art, was faulty in style, and this was an unpardonable fault to audiences accustomed to the polished versification of Corneille, Racine and

Voltaire. Crébillon forgot that he wrote for a nation of artists.

Crébillon and Voltaire.

To bring Crébillon into competition with Voltaire a cabal was organized, whose purpose, however unjust, was certainly less so than that which placed Pradon in opposition to Racine. In certain respects, indeed, the comparison may have been justified; but Crébillon's productions unquestionably exhibit his inferiority. Voltaire felt the opposition too keenly. He was irritated; he showed some littleness of mind, and set himself to prove that on all subjects he was superior to Crébillon. The latter was personally a stranger to the exertions of the anti-Voltairean party, and his reputation suffered from their endeavors to make him the equal of Voltaire. The usurpation of the place which they assigned to him has caused him to be more severely judged and more heavily censured.

Thomas Corneille.

Among the poets of this period a word may here be added as to the younger Corneille, who did not seek, like his brother, to excite astonishment by pictures of heroism so much as to win the favor of the spectators by touches of tenderness. Of his numerous tragedies two only, the *Comte d'Essex* and *Ariadne*, kept possession of the stage; the rest were consigned to oblivion. In the latter of the two, composed after the model of *Bérénice*, the catastrophe may be said to consist in a

swoon. The situation of the resigned and enamored Ariadne, who, after all her sacrifices, sees herself abandoned by Theseus and betrayed by her own sister, is expressed with great truth of feeling. Whenever an actress of an engaging figure, and with a sweet voice, appeared in this character, she was sure to excite interest. The other parts, the cold and deceitful Theseus, the intriguing Phædra, who continues to the last her deception of her confiding sister, the panderer Pirithous, and King Œnarus, who instantly offers himself in the place of the faithless lover, are all pitiful in the extreme. Moreover, the desert rocks of Naxos are here smoothed down to modern drawing-rooms, and the princes who people them, with all the observances of politeness, seek to outwit each other or to beguile the unfortunate princess, who alone retains anything like pretensions to nature.

Thomas Corneille made the same mistake as did his more gifted brother; he remained on the stage longer than he was wanted, until his audiences, becoming weary of his works, first yawned over them and then began to hiss them. True, he must write for bread, but even here he made a mistake; for he would have earned more in some humble capacity than by his ambitious pieces.

Fontenelle.

Bernard le Boier Fontenelle is one of the few centenarians of historical note. Born at Rouen in 1657, he became the favorite nephew of Corneille, who encouraged his dramatic efforts. Yet he was not really a

dramatist, but merely wrote a few plays among a multitude of other works. Fontenelle outlived nearly all the most famous men of the classical and the Voltairean age. He continued to influence men by his conversation long after he had ceased to write. The glory of his illustrious uncle had filled him with poetic enthusiasm, so that, at fourteen, he began to write poetry, and it was not until he was five-and-thirty that he abandoned attempts, to which the Muse had never been auspicious. Fontenelle wrote several dreary operas, though his *Thetis* and *Peleus* were for a time successful. He also wrote sonnets and pastorals, for the latter of which he had not the requisite simplicity, frankness and sincerity. His shepherds do no thinking nor anything else except make love of a rather metaphysical sort. As to his tragedies, they exhibit neither sensibility nor warmth of art, and hence resulted in failure. In the scientific and philosophical works on which his fame entirely rests, Fontenelle remained faithful to the system of Descartes. These, with his eulogies and sketches of manners, his pointed anecdotes and observations, couched in neat terse sentences, have maintained his fame.

La Motte.

Among the nearest friends of Fontenelle was Antoine Houdard de la Motte, blind from his childhood, and from early youth consigned exclusively to the domain of literature. Contrary to the usual fate of literary men, he was generally beloved, and so deserved to be, for the gentleness and amenity of his char-

acter, concerning which some delightful traits are mentioned.

La Motte's mind was ingenuous and natural, but was somewhat lacking in sensibility. The strongest feature in his writings is their good sense, and his defect or weakness was that he ascribed too much to it, believing that good sense, the basis of genius, was genius itself, and that it might be sufficient to make good and even beautiful verses. He passed his life in self-contradiction—he wrote thousands of verses, but did not believe in poetry; he translated and abridged Homer, but did not believe in the ancients; he wanted imagination, and wrote odes. The explanation is that he possessed a dual nature—that of the critic and that of the poet. In the latter character he attempted all kinds of poetry—tragedies, comedies, operas, eclogues, odes, fables and translations in verse.

The tragedies of La Motte are: *Les Machabées, Romulas, Œdipe* and *Inés de Castro.* All were very successful, but the last more than the others. *Inés*, the masterpiece of La Motte, was more exposed to criticism than *Les Machabées,* and belongs to the small number of tragedies of the second order which have not become extinct. This is rare, for we possess many tragedies of the second order which are still quoted, but no longer read. *Inés* has preserved all its freshness; and if it had the charm of fancy and vigor of style, would be reckoned among the masterpieces of the stage. Its subject is admirable, and La Motte has altered the story of Camoens very happily, by introducing the generous character of Constance. The conduct of the action is

easy; the characters are true, noble, natural and without affectation; the subject is eminently tragical. There is nothing odious but the character of the queen, who puts Inés to death by poison; and the author has banished her to the second place. All is beautiful and simple; there are even some bold innovations, among others the introduction of the children of Inés, who succeed in persuading the king.

The play is not eloquently written, and that is its principal defect, but it abounds in admirable verses, which the heart alone can furnish, and which all the intellect in the world could not inspire. Such, for instance, are the lines which Inés addresses to king Alphonso, as she presents to him her children: "Regard both with a compassionate eye; see in them not my blood, but only yours. Pour out on me alone the severity of your anger, but conceal for some time my fate from my husband." Don Pedro says to Inés: "Do not disown, Inés, that I love you." The dying Inés addresses Don Pedro: "Console your father, but do not forget how dear I was to you."

In scene second of the second act Alphonso addresses his son with nobleness, truth and a kind of eloquence:

Your rage is no rule for me; you speak as a soldier—I must act as a king. What is, then, the heir that I leave to my empire? An audacious young man, whose heart is only eager for bloody battles and unjust schemes, and ready to count as nothing the blood of his subjects! I pity Portugal for the evils which the barbarous ambition of this unbridled heart is preparing for her. Is it for conquests that Heaven made kings? Would it, then, have only placed the people under our laws, that at our will foolish tyranny should dare with impunity to

sport with their life? Ah! judge better of the throne, and know, my son, by what sacred title we are seated there. Wise trustees of our subjects' blood, we are not so much their masters as their fathers. At the peril of our lives we must render them happy, and neither conclude peace nor engage in war but for them, and know no honor but in their advantage; and when in its excess our blind courage exposes their destiny for an unrighteous glory, we show ourselves less their kings than their assassins. Think of it when my death, every day drawing nearer, shall put in your hands the dignity of sovereign—remember these duties and fulfill them. At present. Don Pedro, as my subject, obey.

As to the operas of La Motte, the mode of writing once admitted, *Issé* deserves most praise; it is truly original, but the others are of little value.

After the tragedy of *Inés*, it is for his fables that La Motte is still esteemed. They are ingenious, and to the merit of having invented their subjects is added that of having treated them agreeably. It has been justly remarked that the gift of invention, which has often been wanting in very great men, has sometimes been the inheritance of talents of an inferior order. But when La Motte attempted to imitate the simplicity of La Fontaine, he completely failed. His animals neither speak the language of men, nor that which imagination might lend to brutes; they use such words as made J. B. Rousseau declare that an ass expresses himself in these fables like a member of the Academy.

Decadence of Classical Tragedy.

The ramifications of the tragic art of France in its decline need not be further pursued in detail. Among

the contemporaries of Voltaire such names may only be mentioned as Saurin, his imitator, or De Belloy, Saurin's rival. In the latter part of the eighteenth century French tragedy was dying a slow death, however numerous might be the leaves which sprouted from the decaying tree. Its form had been permanently fixed, and even Shakespeare, as treated by Ducis, whose tastes were better than his times, could not effect a change.

Shakespeare on the French Stage.

It cannot be said that the works of Shakespeare have ever become naturalized on the Parisian stage. To say nothing of the difficulties of translation, there is in them little of French manners, French character or of the tastes and genius of the French. The men and women of Shakespeare do not talk and think and act; they do not make love; they do not hate; they do not even eat and drink, as do the heroes and heroines of the French stage. In a word the French have little in common with the English, for though near neighbors, there is between them a sea more formidable than the natural boundary—a gulf as wide as that which separated the Athenians from the Spartans. Then, as to translation, the obstacles are almost insuperable, and the more so that one is a Romance and the other a Teutonic language. How, for instance, would a Frenchman set about translating the great soliloquy beginning "To be, or not to be?" About the best he could do with it would be Être ou ne pas être? and this surely does not convey to us the inner meaning of the original.

VI

Post-Voltairean Drama.

The influences under which classical tragedy became an historical monument rather than a living institution, extended also to French comedy. Here they produced a wide variety and luxuriance of growth, such as no other nation has witnessed. Of many of these the germs are to be found in the works of Molière, the most versatile and brilliant writer of comedy the world has known. Scanty, indeed, were the materials on which Molière built his long series of masterpieces. All that he found in existence was the comedy of intrigue founded on Spanish or Italian examples, and the elements of a comedy of character, partly in French but more in Italian farce and ballet-pantomime. Corneille's *Menteur*, as he relates, pointed out to him the way to a fuller combination of character with intrigue, and in this direction Molière's genius found its fullest development.

Molière's Influence on Comedy.

But a man like Molière can only be judged in his relations to the annals of comedy at large. In Molière we

have both a severe satirist and a kindly humorist. Performing often before the court of Louis XIV, at times he displayed the sentiments of a loyal courtier, and again the gay spirit of opposition almost indispensable to a popular wit. But it is not at court that he appears at his best. His comedies contain elaborate and tender pictures of human character in its perpetual types, and the liveliest sketches of social follies and literary extravagances, coupled occasionally with broad appeals to vulgar merriment. Light and perspicuous in construction, he is master of the delicate play of irony, the penetrating force of wit and the abandon of frolicsome gayety. His style, moulded by a true sense of humor, adapts itself to every phase of comic situation. His morality is far from rigid, yet his works are as free from prurience as they are from pretense. Though without any trace of the didactic element, which is fatal to true dramatic art, the services he rendered to the drama were also services to society, concerning which his comedies told the truth, however unpalatable that truth at times might be.

If the mantle of Molière can be said to have fallen upon any of his contemporaries or successors, this honor must be ascribed to Regnard, who imitated the great master, both in themes and characters, while the ingenuity of his plots and the gayety of his treatment, even of selfish temptings into the by-paths of sentimental comedy, entitled him to be regarded as a comic poet of original genius. Original he certainly was, though not always so in his plots; but, while faulty as to style and versification, he had a thorough

grasp of comic situation and an amusing facility in dialogue, often leading him into farce.

Le Sage.

Alain René Le Sage, the author of *Gil Blas*, passed his life amid hard toil, obscurity and poverty. He wrote much for the little theatres, especially for that of La Foire, for which he produced more than a hundred comedies, or rather, farces. He was neglected by the great and by the government, and severely pursued by Voltaire and other critics, who unjustly accused him of plagiarism from Spanish sources. He died in 1747, in the eightieth year of his age, at the home of his son in Boulogne.

The romances of Le Sage were of a new kind. Though he wrote several, *Gil Blas* and the *Devil on Two Sticks* are the only ones generally known. At the time when some were attempting to put romance into comedy, Le Sage put comedy into romance. His is the true comic romance; that of Scarron, which bears its title, is only a series of burlesque scenes pleasantly related; *Gil Blas* is "an ample comedy with a hundred different acts." In general, the romance is a little epic poem—the history of a short period in a man's life, but here the epic embraces a whole life, it is a series of episodes, the memoirs of an adventurer. Le Sage did not apply himself to any other mode of writing; this was sufficient for him, and perhaps the romance reduced to unity, and with an intricate plot, was not suited to his natural talent.

The subjects treated by Le Sage require caution; his pen is as chaste as his subjects are unfortunately the reverse. In modern romances, as a rule, the more dangerous the subject the more is the danger increased by the mode of expression. Le Sage, on the contrary, remains cool, where he might have attempted to be vehement. He treats grave subjects with irony, and makes his readers laugh at wickedness, but not sympathize with it.

Le Sage does not excel less in dialogue than in narrative. *Gil Blas* belongs to the style of comedy, not merely in the main subject of the book, but still more in its form. Several chapters are real scenes, in which nothing would be found wanting for theatrical success. Accordingly, no one is surprised that Le Sage has written some good comedies, such as *Turcaret* and *Crispin, His Master's Rival.*

Crispin is rather a farce than a comedy, for this style of writing was scarcely otherwise understood, while applause uniformly followed the triumph of audacious knavery. For comic fancy, lively action, and originality, the play deserves to be classed among the best of its kind.

Turcaret is at the head of comedies of the second order. A severe satire on the baseness, cupidity, stupid pride and moral obtuseness of the farmers of the revenues, the financiers of the age, the play might seem to belong to the time of John Law, whom, however, it preceded by several years. Turcaret is a financier, a weak knave, duped and robbed by a baroness, who was an ingenious cheat. The valet and chambermaid are

worse than those whom they serve. There is not an honest person in it—they are all the very dregs of society. It cannot, therefore, produce much interest; but the originality of the thoughts and the fidelity of the character give to this comedy unquestionable merit.

Sentimental Comedy.

In the eighteenth century comedy became more distinctly sentimental. *La Pupille,* for instance, a pretty comedy by Fagan, first played in 1734, is one of the pieces that mark the transition. An orphan is attached to her guardian, and ends by marrying him, after having rejected various offers made through the generous guardian, who was ignorant of the affection of his charge. This was new at the time, though not specially ingenious. Moreover, comedy becomes more probable. It is less ideal, and therefore less poetical; we may add that it is less taken up with the classes of society. The comic writers of the seventeenth century particularly attacked these different classes, and whatever was peculiarly ridiculous in the members of whom they were constituted—physicians, citizens, courtiers, marquises, even those devoted to religion—for *Tartuffe* is not only a satire on hypocrisy, but on a dominant party of the time. A little later, the nobility were ridiculed, the lawyers, the magistrates, and then the farmer of the revenues, who fattened on the substance of the people, and was whitewashed by an alliance with some noble lady without fortune. But, in the eighteenth century writers are rarely concerned with classes;

they aim at character and point at the ridicule connected with humanity itself, rather than at a particular condition. The grand age, deprived of the liberty of the press, was partly redeemed by the liberty of the pulpit, which was extensively used, and by the liberty of the comic theatre. In these two quarters, so commonly hostile to each other, was the twofold refuge of French liberty. But under Louis XV, the press began to be emancipated, manners became free and comedy lost the office which it had filled in the preceding generation. It is less political; it becomes more moral.

Legrand.

Legrand, a contemporary of Regnard, was one of the first comic poets who gained celebrity for afterpieces in verse, a species of composition in which the French have since produced a vast number of elegant trifles. He has not, however, risen to anything like the same height of posthumous fame as Regnard. His *King of Lubberland* is a sprightly farce of the marvellous style, overflowing with a native fanciful wit, animated by lively mirth. It is an ingenious piece of folly, an example of the manner in which a similar play of Aristophanes might be brought on the stage without exciting disgust, and without personal satire. Yet Legrand was entirely unacquainted with the comedy of the Athenians, and it was solely his own genius that led him to the invention. The execution is as careful as in a regular comedy; but to this title, in the French opinion, it can have no pretensions, because of the wonderful

world which it represents, because of the decorations, and of the music here and there introduced.

Spirit of French Comedy.

The eighteenth century produced in France a number of comic writers of the second and third rank, but no distinguished genius capable of advancing the art a step further, in consequence of which the belief in Molière's unapproachable excellence has become still more firmly riveted. A few observations on the general spirit of French comedy may here precede further notice of its writers.

The want of easy progress and over-lengthy disquisitions in stationary dialogue have characterized more or less nearly every writer since the time of Molière, on whose regular pieces also the conventional rules applicable to tragedy had an indisputable influence. French comedy in verse has its tirades, as well as tragedy, and it has the additional drawback of a certain degree of stately etiquette. The comedy of other nations has usually, from motives which are easily understood, descended into the circle of the lower classes; but French comedy is for the most part confined to the upper ranks of society. Here, then, we trace the influence of the court as the central point of the whole national vanity. Those spectators who in reality have no access to the great world, were flattered by being surrounded on the stage with marquises and chevaliers, and while the poet satirized their fashionable follies, they endeavored to snatch something of that privileged tone which was so

much the object of envy. Society rubs off the salient angles of character; its amusement consists mainly in the pursuit of the ridiculous, and on the other hand it trains people in the faculty of being upon their guard against the observations of others. The natural, cordial and jovial comic features of the inferior classes is thrown aside, and instead of it another description, the fruit of polished society, is adopted, bearing in its insipidity the stamp of its purposeless way of living.

The object of these comedies is no longer real life, but society, that perpetual negotiation between conflicting vanities which never ends in a sincere treaty of peace. The insipid uniformity of these pictures was unfortunately too often seasoned by the corruption of moral principles which, under the regency of Louis XV, it became the fashion openly to avow. The gallant who in the tone of satiety boasts of the multitude of his conquests too easily won, was not a character invented by comic writers, but a portrait accurately taken from real life, as is proved by the numerous memoirs of the period.

Even if, in the constant ridicule of marriage by the petit-maitres, and in their moral skepticism especially with regard to female virtue, it was the intention of the poets to ridicule a prevailing depravity, the picture is not on that account the less immoral. The great or fashionable world, which in point of numbers is the little world, and yet considers itself alone of importance, can hardly be improved by it; and for the other classes the example is but too seductive, from the brilliancy with which the characters are surrounded. The French

comedy of this age would not deal with the low or middle classes, which were considered as altogether beneath the dignity of its art.

Destouches.

While too many comic writers may be charged with fostering immorality, there are some conspicuous exceptions, especially Destouches and Marivaux, fruitful or at least diligent playwrights, the former in verse and the latter in prose. They acquired considerable distinction among their contemporaries, but on the stage few of their works survived either of them. Destouches was a mediocre, tame and well-meaning author, who applied himself with his utmost powers to the composition of regular five-act comedies, in which there is little or nothing laughable. He was in no danger of falling from the dignified tone of the supposed high comic into the familiarity of farce, which the French hold in such contempt. With moderate talents, without humor, and almost without vivacity, neither ingenious in invention nor possessed of real insight into the human mind and human affairs, he has in some of his productions, as *Le Glorieux, Le Philosophe Marié,* and especially *L'Indecis,* shown with great credit to himself what true and unpretending diligence is capable of effecting. Other pieces, as *L'Ingrat* and *L'Homme Singulier*, are complete failures, and enable us to see that a poet who considers *Tartuffe* and *The Misanthrope* as the highest objects of imitation, has only another step to take to lose sight of the comic art altogether. These two works of Mo-

lière have not been friendly beacons to his followers, but false lights to their ruin.

Born at Tours in 1680 Philippe Néricault Destouches was descended from an honorable and wealthy family. Thwarted in a youthful attachment, he left the paternal roof and joined a company of actors, who from city to city brought him to Soleure, in Switzerland, where the French ambassador at that time resided. There Destouches brought on the stage his first work, *Le Curieux Impertinent*, which was received with transport, and the suffrage of the audience was presently confirmed by its favorable reception on the French stage. This success gained for Destouches the notice of the ambassador, who, perceiving in him qualities far superior to the condition of a comedian, induced him to quit the theatre, and initiated him in diplomacy. The regent sent him to London, where he represented France for seven years, was married, and on his return to his own country lived in retirement, amusing his leisure hours with writing comedies. Voltaire called him "his dear Terence, his illustrious friend," and said of his *Glorieux*, perhaps the best of his plays: "Solid and ingenious author, master of the theatre, it will be in your power, who wrote the *Glorieux*, to be yourself glorious."

La Chaussée.

Pierre Claude Nivelle de La Chaussée, born in 1692 in the midst of opulence, cultivated letters from taste. His first work for the theatre appeared when he was nearly forty years of age. Destouches had introduced

the sentimental comedy; La Chaussée went a step farther, and published dramatic works in which sentiment constituted all the interest. His plays were tragi-comic. This innovation is not entirely the doing of La Chaussée, it belongs also to Voltaire. *L'Enfant Prodigue* appeared in 1736, and the principal works of La Chaussée are posterior to that date. Nevertheless, he is regarded as the founder of a very acceptable style of writing, to which he gave much consistency, by the number and success of his plays.

As to the meaning and origin of tragi-comedy, it may be remarked that on the stage, in the seventeenth century, the citizens were ridiculous, or held to be so. In the eighteenth century they acquired there an avowed importance. If citizens are represented, it is no longer that as citizens they may be derided; the nobility would rather be the object of ridicule, and it is this disposition which must lead to the comedy or tragedy of the citizens, that is, to tragi-comedy.

Moreover, prose is less exempt than poetry from external influence. Poetry aspires to the ideal; it lives by contemplation, and is little compromised by the choice of its subjects. The poet looks high and far, and makes his choice, and scarcely inquires about the immediate end of his art. An age which becomes more prosaic at once gains and loses by it; it loses by descending from the ideal, it gains by approaching the reality. Poetry falls back, and prose goes forward a step. The poetry of the seventeenth century has only itself in view; the poetry of the eighteenth, less truly poetical, aims at action. Comedy is the ideal of human

nature contemplated on the ridiculous side. Tragedy is its ideal, viewed on the side of disaster and passion. The tragi-comedy, an intermediate style, has less poetry than either.

La Chaussée was not a man of genius, although he was happy in invention and combination; he does not conceive powerfully, and does not search deeply into character. He wrote naturally; he has a great number of verses happily expressed, and yet his style has little power. It is soft like the mode of writing which he cultivated, and very different from that of Destouches, who has a style singularly bold.

La Chaussée's best plays are *Le Préjugé à la Mode*, *Mélanide*, and *La Gouvernante*. The two last are rather highly-wrought romances transferred to the stage. *Le Préjugé à la Mode* comes nearer to comedy; it is La Chaussée's masterpiece, although it is upon a subject which can no longer be very interesting. The prejudice which he describes is not now the fashion, and a man is no longer ashamed to be a good husband. Still there is more truth in the piece than in the *Married Philosopher* of Destouches, and there are some fine points which the author has the merit of inventing, but which are not sufficiently set off by the style. Nevertheless there is much of interest, as in the following lines: "I observe in the present day that it has no longer a good appearance to love a companion with whom you associate. This practice is only found among the citizens. But, besides, conjugal love has been made perfectly ridiculous. A husband at present dares no longer appear so. He must sacrifice to cruel prejudice the pleasures of a

lawful and mutual love. In vain is he attached to a wife who loves him; fashion subjects him in spite of himself, and soon reduces him to the necessity of passing from shame to unfaithfulness." This sort of tragicomedy was cultivated, modified and defended by Voltaire, Saurin, Diderot, Beaumarchais and others.

Marivaux.

Pierre Caslet de Chamblain Marivaux is usually reckoned among the novelists rather than the dramatists of France. His romances were among the first that delineated real life and manners, and though full of false sentiments and written in affected style, they enjoyed great popularity. Voltaire admitted that Marivaux "knew the paths to the heart," but added that "he was ignorant of the high road." Perhaps Voltaire was prejudiced, as he was defeated by Marivaux when both were candidates for the Academy in 1743.

That Marivaux was a mannerist is so universally acknowledged in France that the peculiar term of "marivaudage" has been invented for his mannerism. But this is at least his own, and at first sight by no means unpleasing. Delicacy of mind cannot be denied to him; only it is coupled with a certain littleness. It is one of the most refined species of what may be called the comic of observation, when a peculiarity or property shows itself most conspicuously at the very time its possessor has the least suspicion of it, or is most studious to conceal it. Marivaux applied this to the passions; and naiveté in the involuntary disclosure of emotions

certainly belongs to the domain of comedy. But this naiveté is prepared by him with too much art; he appears too solicitous for our applause, and seems too well pleased with it himself. Marivaux's aim is observed from the very beginning, and all our attention is directed to discovering the way by which he is to lead us to it. This might be a skillful mode of composing, if it did not degenerate into the insignificant and the superficial. Marivaux has neither painted characters nor contrived intrigue. The whole plot generally turns on an unpronounced word, which is always at the tongue's end, and which is frequently kept back in rather an arbitrary manner. Nevertheless, he possessed a peculiar though a very limited view of the essence of comedy.

Although, perhaps, too much decried, it may still be said that the status of Marivaux has, in the main, been justly determined; all the critics agree about his excellencies and defects; those, however, who only know him from the opinions generally entertained, undervalue him, and if they become acquainted with his works, will probably find them much better than they expected.

Marivaux was a man of much wit, a delicate moralist and an acute observer. It may be added that, in reference to morality, he was one of the purest writers of his age. In this respect he is not only irreproachable but exalted. In his literary opinions he took part with the period in which he lived, but it was quite different in regard to his philosophical ideas, and he always showed respect for religion. His taste for minute ob-

servation injured, nay, ruined him as a writer. He is the spy of the human heart and the informer against it; he keeps always on its path, has his ear constantly at the key-hole, and his accusations or indiscretions are a kind of unravelling of the web, which may often appear trifling, but which destroys many threads of gold and silk.

To this taste for minute analysis he unites the habit of keeping up the delicacy of the thought by the contrast of a vulgar expression. It is a kind of coquetry analogous to that of Fontenelle. The latter wished to appear simple, Marivaux to appear familiar. Another fault is diffuseness. He seldom knows when to stop, and his exuberance sometimes generates into mere babble; his psychology is a sort of gossip applied, not to this and that individual, but to human nature.

Marivaux wrote several interesting comedies, full of the most amiable delicacy; but everybody in them, down to the footman, has a taste for minute observation. One of the best is named *La Surprise de l'Amour*, and this title would suit all of them; for we see in all a woman's heart surprised or insensibly assailed by a feeling to which it appears at first entirely averse. We observe with curiosity the successive transformations of this germ; we discover a singular mixture of artlessness and hypocrisy in a tender heart, and see it contributing to the deception which is attempted against it. It is a pleasure to the spectator, but not of a very æsthetic character. Nothing of this kind is superior to his play of the *False Confidence*. The principal personage, Araminte, is very noble; the action is interesting; and

as to the description of the heart, it is Racine in miniature

Metromanie and Méchant.

Two masterpieces in the regular comedy in verse belong to writers who here, perhaps, have taken more pains, but in other departments have given a freer scope to their natural talent—the *Metromanie* of Piron and the *Méchant* of Gresset. The *Metromanie* is not written without humorous inspiration. In the young man possessed with a passion for poetry, Piron intended in some measure to paint himself; but as we are seldom too severe in ridicule of ourselves, he endows his hero further with talents, magnanimity and a good heart. But such tender reserve is not favorable for comic strength. The *Méchant* is one of those gloomy comedies which might be rapturously hailed by a Timon as serving to confirm his aversion to human society, but which, on social and cheerful minds, can only give rise to the most painful impression. Why paint a dark and odious disposition which, devoid of all human sympathy, feeds its vanity in a cold contempt and derision of everything, and solely occupies itself in aimless detraction?

Yet the French critics have decided that the three comedies, the *Glorieux*, the *Metromanie* and the *Méchant*, are all that the eighteenth century can oppose to Molière.

Opera.

Let us now turn for a moment to the opera, which, with its offspring, the vaudeville, has always been a

favorite form of entertainment. Neither had its origin in France, though it was among the French that both attained their greatest popularity, later becoming naturalized throughout Europe and the United States.

To the serious, heroic, or rather the ideal, opera, if we may so term it, only one poet gave his attention in the age of Louis XIV—Quinault, who is now little read, notwithstanding his unquestionable merit. As a tragic poet, in the early period of his career, he was satirized by Boileau; but he was afterward highly successful in the musical drama. Mazarin had introduced into France a taste for the Italian opera; Louis was also desirous of rivalling or surpassing foreign countries in the external magnificence of the drama, in decoration, machinery, music and dancing; these were all to be employed in the celebration of the court festivals; and accordingly Molière was employed to write gay, and Quinault serious, operas, to the music of Lulli. Quinault labored more after Spanish than Italian models, and derived from the Fiestas of Calderon the general form of his operas and the frequently allegorical preludes which are to be found in them. It is true, poetical ornament is much more sparingly dealt out, as the whole is necessarily shortened for the sake of the music; and the very nature of the French language and versification is incompatible with the splendid magnificence, the luxurious fullness, displayed by Calderon. But the operas of Quinault are, in their easy progress, truly fanciful; for the serious opera cannot be stripped of the charm of the marvellous without becoming wearisome. So far Quinault appears to have taken much better methods

in this department than Metastasio adopted. The latter has admirably provided for the wants of a melodious music expressive solely of feeling, but nowhere does he furnish the least food for the imagination. On the other hand, Quinault has sacrificed, in compliance with the taste of his countrymen, everything like comic intermixture, and he has been censured for an occasional play on language in the expression of feeling. Yet it is hardly just to exact the severity of the tragical cothurnus in light works of this description; for poetry also should be allowed her arabesque.

The verses of Quinault have no other naiveté and simplicity than those of the madrigal; and though they occasionally fall into the luscious, at other times they express a languishing tenderness with a soft and graceful melody. The opera, in Quinault's opinion, ought to resemble the enchanted gardens of Armida, of which he says: "In these enchanted spots pleasure presides." We should only be awakened out of the voluptuous dreams of feeling to enjoy the magical illusions of fancy. When once we have come to imagine, instead of real men, beings whose only language is song, it is but a very short step to represent to ourselves creatures whose only occupation is love; that feeling which hovers between the sensible and intellectual world; and the first invention becomes natural again by means of the second.

Quinault had no successor; for far below his, both in point of invention and execution, are the French operas of later times. The heroic and tragic have been required in a department where they cannot produce

their proper effect. Instead of handling with fanciful freedom mythological materials or subjects taken from chivalrous or pastoral romances, they have, after the manner of tragedy, chained themselves down to history, and by means of their heavy seriousness and the pedantry of their rules they have so managed matters that Dullness, with leaden sceptre, presides over the opera. The deficiencies of their music, the unfitness of the French language for such composition, the unaccented and arbitrary nature of their recitative, the bawling bravura of the singers, have been sufficiently described in the animadversions of musical critics.

Comic Opera.

With pretensions far lower, the comic opera, or operette, approaches much more nearly to perfection. With respect to composition, it assumes almost entirely a national tone. The transition from song to speech, without any musical accompaniment or heightening, which was censured by Rousseau as an unsuitable mixture of two distinct modes of composition, may be displeasing to the ear; but it has unquestionably produced an advantageous effect on the structure of the piece. In the recitatives, which generally are not half understood, and seldom listened to with any degree of attention, a plot which is even moderately complicated cannot be developed with due clearness. Hence, in the Italian opera buffa, the action is altogether neglected; and along with its grotesque caricatures, it is distinguished for uniform situations, which do not admit of

dramatic progress. But the comic opera of the French, although from the space occupied by the music it is not susceptible of much dramatic development, is still calculated to produce a considerable stage effect, and speaks pleasingly to the imagination. The poets have not here been prevented by the constraint of rules from following out their theatrical views. Hence these fleeting productions are in nowise deficient in the rapidity, life and attractiveness which are frequently wanting in the more pretentious dramatic works of the French.

The favor which the operettes of Favart and other poets have met with in foreign countries cannot be placed to the account of the music; it is in reality owing to their poetical merit.

Vaudeville.

The vaudeville, as first introduced in France, was but a variation of the comic opera. The essential difference was that it dispensed with composition, by which the comic opera formed a musical whole, as the songs were set to well-known popular airs. The incessant skipping from the song to the dialogue, with the accumulation of airs mostly common, but frequently also in a style altogether different from the poetry, was apt to drive an ear accustomed to Italian music to despair. If the spectator could once make up his mind to bear with this, he would not infrequently be richly recompensed with comic drollery; even in the choice of a melody, and the allusion to common and well-known subjects, there was often a display of wit. In earlier times writers of higher pretensions, as Le Sage and Piron, labored in

the department of the vaudeville, and even for marionettes. The wits who afterward dedicated themselves to this species were little known out of Paris, but this gave them no great concern. It often happened that several of them joined together, that the fruit of their common talents might be sooner brought to light. The parody of new theatrical pieces, the anecdotes of the day, which formed the common talk among all the idlers of the capital, must furnish them with subjects, and in working them up, little delay could be brooked.

Attempts at Variation in Drama.

The latter condition of dramatic art in France, toward the close of the eighteenth century, depended much on the endeavors to introduce the theatrical ideas of other countries in mixed species of the drama. The hope of producing anything really new in the two species which are alone admitted to be regular, of excelling the works already produced, of filling up the old frames with richer pictures, became more and more distant every day. A new work seldom obtained decided approbation; and, even at best, this approbation only lasted until it had been found out that the play was merely a new preparation of the old classical productions.

Diderot.

The attacks made on French forms of art, first by La Motte, and afterward by Diderot and Le Mercier, have been like voices in the wilderness. It could not be

otherwise, as the principles on which these writers proceeded were in reality destructive, not merely of the conventional forms, but of all poetical forms whatever. The most remarkable among them is Diderot, whom Lessing calls the best critic of the French, but whom other judges declare to be no critic at all. It is not merely that he has mistaken the object of poetry and the fine arts, which he considered to be merely moral. A man may be a critic without being a theorist; but a man cannot be a critic without being thoroughly acquainted with the conditions, means and styles of an art; and here the nature of Diderot's studies and acquirements renders his critical capabilities extremely questionable. This ingenious sophist deals out his blows with such haste in the province of criticism that the half of them are thrown away. The true and the false, the old and the new, the essential and the unimportant, are so mixed up together that the highest praise we can bestow upon him is that he is worthy of the labor of disentangling them.

What Diderot wished to accomplish had either been already accomplished, though not in France, or did not deserve to be accomplished, or was altogether impracticable. His attack on the formality of the dramatic probabilities, on the excessive symmetry of the French versification, declamation and mode of acting was just; but, at the same time, he objected to all theatrical elevation, and refused to allow to the characters anything like a perfect mode of communicating what was passing within them. He nowhere assigns the reason why he held versification as not suitable, or prose as more suit-

able, to familiar tragedy. This has been asserted by Lessing and others, of every species of the drama; but the ground for it is evidently nothing but the mistaken principles of illusion and nature. The main thing, according to Diderot, is not character and situations, but ranks of life and family relations, that spectators in similar ranks and relations may lay the example to heart. But this would put an end to everything like true enjoyment in art.

It is clear that Diderot was induced to take in sail as he made way with his own dramatic attempts. He displayed the greatest boldness in an offensive publication of his youth, in which he wished to overturn the entire dramatic system of the French; he was less daring in the dialogues which accompany his *Fils Naturel*, and he showed the greatest moderation in the treatise appended to his *Père de Famille*. He carried his hostility entirely too far with respect to the forms and objects of dramatic art. But in other respects he has not gone far enough; in his view of the unities of place and time, and the mixture of seriousness and mirth, he has shown himself infected with the prejudices of his nation.

The two pieces above mentioned, which obtained an unmerited reputation on their first appearance, have long since been awarded their due place in the drama. On the *Fils Naturel*, Lessing has pronounced a severe sentence, without, however, censuring the flagrant plagiarism from Goldoni. But the *Père de Famille* he calls an excellent work, while neglecting to assign any grounds for his opinion. Its defective plot and want of connection have been well exposed by La Harpe.

The execution of both pieces exhibits the utmost mannerism; the characters, which are anything but natural, appear from their frigid prating about virtue in the most hypocritical style, and the tears which they are perpetually shedding, altogether intolerable. The custom which has grown up of giving long and circumstantial directions respecting the action has been of the greatest detriment to dramatic eloquence. In this way the poet gives, as it were, an order on the player, instead of paying out of his own purse. All good dramatists have uniformly had the action in some degree present to their minds; but if the actor requires instruction on the subject he will hardly possess the talent of following it up with the suitable gestures. The speeches should be so framed that an intelligent actor could hardly fail to give them the proper action.

Long before Diderot there were serious family pictures, affecting dramas and familiar tragedies, much better than any which he was capable of executing. Voltaire gave in his *Enfant Prodigue* and *Nanine* a mixture of comic scenes and affecting situations, which are deserving of high praise. The sentimental drama had been before attempted in France by La Chaussée. All this was in verse, and why not? But the sentimental drama was never very successful in France, where people were too much attached to brilliancy and pomp.

Beaumarchais and Le Mercier.

Notwithstanding the opposition which Diderot experienced, he was the founder of a school of which the

most distinguished names are Beaumarchais and Le Mercier. The former wrote only two pieces in the spirit of his predecessor—*Eugénie* and *La Mère Coupable*—and they display the very same faults. His acquaintance with Spain and the Spanish theatre led him to bring something new on the stage in the way of the comedy of intrigue, a species which had long been neglected. His works were more distinguished by witty sallies than by humor of character; but their greatest attraction consisted in the allusions to his own career as an author. The plot of his *Barber of Seville* is rather trite; the *Marriage of Figaro* is planned with more art, but the manners which it portrays are loose; and it is also censurable in a poetical point of view, on account of the number of foreign excrescences with which it is loaded. In both French characters are exhibited under the disguise of a Spanish costume, which, however, is very ill observed. The extraordinary applause which these pieces met with would lead to the conclusion that the French public did not hold the comedy of intrigue in such low estimation as it is held by the critics; but the means by which Beaumarchais pleased were certainly, in part at least, foreign to art.

In the sphere of dramatic literature the labors of Le Mercier are undoubtedly deserving of attention. This able man endeavored to break through the prescribed limits in every possible way, and was so passionately fond of his art that nothing could deter him from it; although almost every new attempt which he made converted the pit into a regular field of battle. The inclinations of the French public, when they forget the

duties learned from Boileau's *Art of Poetry*, are not so hostile to the dramatic productions of other nations as might be supposed, and the old and narrow system is chiefly upheld by a superstitious attachment to traditional opinions.

Ducis' Adaptations of Shakespeare.

The attempt of Ducis to make his countrymen acquainted with Shakespeare by modeling a few of his tragedies according to the French rules, cannot be accounted an enlargement of their theatre. We perceive here and there indeed the "torn members of the poet;" but the whole is so constrained, disfigured, and from the simple fullness of the original, tortured and twisted into such miserable intricacy, that even when the language is retained word for word, it ceases to convey its genuine meaning. The crowd which these tragedies attracted, especially from their affording scope to the inimitable Talma for the display of his art, must be looked upon as no slight symptom of the people's dissatisfaction with their old dramas, and the want of others more powerfully agitating.

French Theatre in Eighteenth Century.

The histrionic art was more fully developed in France in the eighteenth century than in any other country in the world. In external dignity, quickness, correctness of memory and a wonderful degree of propriety and elegance in the delivery of verse, the best French actors

could hardly be surpassed. Their efforts to please were incredible, every moment they passed on the stage was a valuable opportunity, of which they must avail themselves. The extremely fastidious taste of the Parisian critics excited in them a spirit of warm emulation. A number of classical works for generations have been in the possession of the stage, and this fact contributed also greatly to their excellence. As the spectators knew these works well, their whole attention was directed to the acting, and even a faulty syllable would be detected.

High Comedy and Tragedy.

In high comedy the social refinement of the nation afforded great advantages to its actors. But in the representation of tragedy the art of the histrion does not accommodate itself to the spirit of the poetry. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the authors of tragedies, especially those of the age of Louis XIV, would have approved the mode in which their compositions were represented. The tragic imitation and recitation of the ordinary French tragedian oscillated between two opposite extremes, the first of which is occasioned by the prevailing tone of the piece, while the second seemed rather to be at variance with it, between measured formality and extravagant boisterousness. Here, be it understood, we are not speaking of the great masters, as Talma and Le Kain, or among women, Rachel and Mars.

Voltaire has described the manner in which, in the

time of Louis XIV, Augustus delivered his discourse to Cinna and Maximus. "Augustus entered with the step of a braggadocio, his head covered with a four-cornered peruque, which hung down to his girdle; the peruque was stuck full of laurel leaves, and above this he wore a large hat with a double row of red feathers. He seated himself on a huge fauteuil, two steps high, Cinna and Maximus on two low chairs; and the pompous declamation fully corresponded with the ostentatious manner in which he made his appearance. As at that time, and even long afterward, tragedies were acted in a court-dress of the newest fashion, with large cravats, swords and hats, no other movements were practicable but such as were allowable in the antechamber, or, at most, a slight waving of the hand; and it was even considered a bold theatrical attempt, when, in the last scene of *Polyeucte*, Severus entered with his hat on his head for the purpose of accusing Felix of treachery, and the latter listened to him with his hat under his arm."

There were also early examples of extravagance of an opposite description. In the *Mariamne* of Mairet, an older poet than Corneille, the player who acted Herod roared himself to death. When Voltaire was instructing an actress in some tragic part, she said to him: "Were I to play in this manner, Sir, they would say the devil was in me." "Very right," answered Voltaire, "an actress ought to have the devil in her." This expression proves, at least, no very keen sense for that dignity and sweetness which, in an ideal composition, such as French tragedy pretends to be, ought never to be lost sight of, even in the wildest whirlwind of

passion. But Voltaire, with all his genius, cannot be accepted as an authority on matters histrionic.

Schlegel on French Actors.

Says Schlegel, writing early in the nineteenth century: "Even in the action of the very best players of the present day there are sudden leaps from the measured solemnity in recitation and gesticulation which the general tone of the composition required, to a boisterousness of passion absolutely convulsive, without any due preparation or softening by intervening gradations. They are led to this by a sort of obscure feeling that the conventional forms of poetry generally impede the movements of nature; when the poet anywhere leaves them at liberty, they then indemnify themselves for the former constraint, and load, as it were, this rare moment of abandonment with the whole amount of life and animation which had been kept back, and which ought to have been equally diffused over the whole. Hence their convulsive and obstreperous violence. In bravura they take care not to be deficient; but they frequently lose sight of the true spirit of the composition. In general, with the single exception of the great Talma, they consider their parts as a sort of mosaic work of brilliant passages, and they rather endeavor to make the most of each separate passage, independently of the rest, than to go back to the visible central point of the character, and to consider every expression of it as an emanation from that point. They are always afraid of underdoing their parts; and hence they are

worse qualified for reserved action, for eloquent silence, where, under an appearance of outward tranquillity, the most hidden emotions of the mind are betrayed. However, this is a part which is seldom imposed on them by their poets; and if the cause of such excessive violence in the expression of passion is not to be found in the works themselves, they at all events occasion the actor to lay greater stress on superficial brilliancy than on a profound knowledge of character."

Marie Anne Dangeville.

A curious feature in the annals of the Comédie Française is the constant recurrence of the same family patronymic. We find, for instance, among its members, six bearing the name of Baron, seven of Poisson, and seven others of Quinault. The Dangevilles were five in number, and Marie Anne, the youngest of this well-known theatrical family, was beyond compare the best soubrette that had thus far appeared on the Parisian stage. Born in Paris, in 1714, at the age of eight she made her appearance at the Comédie Française as La Jeunesse in *L'Inconnu;* the part intrusted to her consisted of some fifty lines, which she spoke with such infantine grace and appropriate expression as to make her the feature of the performance. Enchanted with the intelligence and precocity of the young recruit, the public at once adopted her as an established favorite, and as long as her youth limited her to children's parts, "la petite Dangeville" was the object of universal admiration. As she grew older she profited by the example

and instruction of her aunt, Mdlle. Desmares; and on attaining her sixteenth year more than justified the general expectation of the brilliant success of her début, which took place in January, 1730, as the soubrette in Destouches' *Médisant*. Subsequently she was engaged to "double" Mdlle. Quinault in the soubrettes, as well as for the usual routine of juvenile tragedy.

Soon after her first appearance it was remarked by one of the foremost critics of the day: "She begins as the majority of great comedians finish—with perfection." His verdict was endorsed by the élite of Parisian society; the new actress speedily became the fashion, partly owing to her rare personal attractions, and partly to the sprightliness of her manner and the fascinating piquancy of her delivery. The versatility of her talent enabled her not merely to embody with life-like truth such widely different types as the Nicole of Molière and the Lisette of Marivaux, but even to represent with equal finish of detail the languishing coquette and the patched and powdered marquise. In addition to the standard repertory of the theatre, the parts originally created by her in the productions of the authors of her day included almost every successful comedy performed during a period exceeding thirty years, until her retirement from the stage in 1763.

As Hermione in Racine's *Andromaque* Dangeville charmed the spectators by an unexpected display of pathos and sensibility; the part of Tullie in *Brutus* was written for her by Voltaire, but, unwilling to risk her reputation by any further essays in a line of characters to which she felt herself naturally unsuited, she refused

it, and it was played by Madame Dufresne. She probably acted wisely in abandoning tragedy to others, and in contenting herself with the more congenial specialty in which she was acknowledged to be without a rival.

Dangeville possessed in an eminent degree the faculty of estimating, previous to the production of a piece, the chances of its success or failure; and by her intuitive knowledge of stage effects suggested many useful hints to leading dramatists of her day. On one occasion Destouches, while conversing on the subject of a new comedy, consulted her as to the propriety of suppressing a particular monologue, which he feared might not be to the taste of the audience. "Do nothing of the kind," she replied; "leave it exactly as it is, word for word, and I guarantee that you will not repent it." The event proved that she was right; the monologue in question, spoken by herself, being applauded to the echo, and winning a veritable triumph both for actress and author.

Saint-Foix' Estimate of Dangeville.

Saint-Foix, in a letter written after the retirement of Dangeville, gave a faithful record of the impression produced on him by a long acquaintance with the captivating soubrette. "You ask my opinion respecting a picture, the subject of which is intended to represent Thalia weeping, as she endeavors to retain an actress who persists in abandoning her. Your talent will undoubtedly do full justice to the comic muse; but as regards Mdlle. Dangeville—she being the model selected by you—how is it possible adequately to render her deli-

cately-shaped features, her eyes, her mouth, her sylph-like figure, her ever-charming and ever-varying expression? . . . We have seen Mdlle. Dangeville in characters essentially opposed to each other, and cannot even now decide in which she pleased us best. Those who come after us will scarcely believe that the same person could have played, and with indescribable perfection, Martine in *Les Femmes Savantes*, La Fause Agnès, La Comtesse de Pimbêche in *Les Plaideurs*; and Julie in *La Femme Juge et Partie*. . . . In Mdlle. Dangeville you would have found neither pride nor affectation of superiority; she was, and is, simple, modest and unconscious of her own value, and though exposed to perpetual contact with cabal and intrigue, has invariably remained a stranger to both."

Throughout her professional career, the popularity of this eminent actress may be truly said to have never experienced the slightest fluctuation. More than once, by a happy inspiration, she succeeded in reversing an unfavorable verdict. On the first performance of *Les Mécontents*, for instance, the audience, who had listened with impatience to the three acts of this indifferent comedy, were so enraptured by the arch vivacity with which she sang the final couplets as loudly to demand their repetition. She complied with the request, and at the close was called upon to sing them a third time; upon which she came to the front, and, instead of recommencing, merely repeated the concluding line: "There he is, like man who is never satisfied."

This significant hint, accompanied by a smile and a low curtsey, acted like magic on the spectators, who

applauded her till the house rang. As the fair siren afterward remarked, though *Les Mécontents* (The Dissatisfied) remained in the bills, there was not one left in the auditorium.

Retirement.

The announcement in 1763 of her retirement from the stage—conjointly with that of her brother and Mdlle. Gaussin—was a severe blow to the Comédie Française, and many years elapsed before the void occasioned by her departure was even partially filled up. On the evening preceding the annual closing of the theatre, her comrade, Dauberval, thus concluded the customary address to the public: "You have lost an actress who has long delighted and charmed you, and we a companion as dear to us as she was precious. Far from displaying, as is too frequently the case, any consciousness of superiority, she was modesty itself, and disclaimed all pretension of serving as a model for others. By the gentleness and amiability of her disposition she gained universal esteem and sympathy, and those who knew her best had the most reason to admire and to love her!"

On quitting the scene of her triumphs, after a glorious career of thirty-three years, Mdlle. Dangeville continued to reside at Vaugirard. She passed the remainder of her life happily, respected and unmolested even during the most disastrous period of the Revolution. She lived to be eighty-two, and her bust in marble still occupies a place of honor in the gallery of dramatic celebrities. In truth she was worthy of the honor; for

on the French stage there were none more highly respected, both in her public and private career.

Marie Françoise Dumesnil.

Seven years after the death of Adrienne Lecouvreur a young actress, of whose promising impersonations at Strasburg and Compiègne favorable accounts had reached the capital, made her first appearance at the Français in August, 1737, as Clytemnestre in *Iphigénie en Aulide.* Marie Françoise Dumesnil—for this was her name—was born in Normandy in 1712. She must, therefore, have been twenty-five years of age at her début, although she owned only to twenty-two.

Seldom, indeed, had a newcomer met with so enthusiastic a reception; for she was at once adopted by the public without a dissenting voice. So decisive was her triumph that the usual regulations of the theatre were set aside in her favor, and after a performance of *Phèdre* before the court at Fontainebleau, her admission as a member of the society was definitely accorded. She was spared the long and tedious apprenticeship which the greatest of her contemporaries had been compelled to undergo. A position, hitherto attainable only as a recompense for past services, was granted to her at the outset, and her right to it was amply justified by a popularity which lasted thirty-nine years. Since Lecouvreur no one had produced so powerful an effect on the audience by the terrible energy of her acting, and it is even doubtful whether, in certain characters, she did not surpass her famous predecessor, especially as Cléo-

pâtre. It is related that, on one occasion, so intense was the horror inspired by her impassioned fury that the occupants of the pit nearest the stage recoiled from her, leaving an empty space between the orchestra and themselves. On the same evening, in the scene where, expiring in a convulsion of rage, she uttered the line, "I would curse the gods if they restored me to life," an old officer, seated on one side of the stage, struck her a sharp blow on the back, exclaiming in a transport of indignation: "Begone, you bitch!" At the conclusion of the tragedy the officer apologized for the outrage he had committed, and was laughingly assured by the actress that of all the compliments she had received during her life, his was the most gratifying.

Unlike her rival, Mdlle. Clairon, whose excellence was the result of a rare artistic intelligence combined with unremitting study, Mdlle. Dumesnil depended for her inspiration on nature alone. Endowed with every innate quality essential to the formation of a great actress, she needed no feigned sensibility, no simulated passion; guided by her unerring instinct, and completely identifying herself with the personage represented, she was pathetic or terrible as the situation demanded, but always in earnest, always irresistibly real. She saw at a glance the effect to be produced, and never missed it; a single reading of the part sufficed not only to imprint its leading features on her memory, but also to indicate with infallible accuracy the precise scene or moment where the talent of the exponent could be most advantageously displayed. On this particular point she concentrated every effort of her genius, and herein lay her

principal defect. Preserving herself wholly for the outburst of rage or tenderness destined to electrify her hearers, she was too apt to neglect the relatively unimportant passages leading up to it, and to hurry over them with a volubility sometimes bordering on the ludicrous. These sudden and abrupt transitions from a rapid and monotonous delivery—totally free, however, from the declamatory sing-song of many of her colleagues—to a height of sublimity unequalled, perhaps, in the annals of French tragedy, were strongly censured by the admirers of Clairon, as contrasting unfavorably with her rival's minute attention to detail; but their criticisms had little weight with the general public; for Dumesnil, during the entire course of their professional rivalry, was unquestionably the more popular of the two.

Dorat on Dumesnil.

Dorat, in his poem of *La Declamation*, declares that Melpomene herself has appeared, describing in graphic terms his own impressions, while horror-struck by her appalling impetuosity, and quailing beneath her penetrating eye. "Such was her Cléopâtre, such her Clytemnestre, in all the majesty of their regal robes, and surrounded by the pomp and glittering paraphernalia of the stage;" but what a difference was there between the imposing actress, whose eagle glance and thrilling tones held despotic sway over the spell-bound multitude, and the unambitious bourgeoise who, her gems and costly trappings laid aside, returned on foot and unattended to her modest home!

Unlike the superb and haughty Clairon, whose queenly magnificence never deserted her for an instant, Mdlle. Dumesnil, once removed from the scene of her triumphs, quietly resumed her simple habits with her every-day attire, and aspired to no further sovereignty. Naturally reserved and averse to publicity, she had little temptation to mix in general society. Though her features were intelligent and agreeable, she had no pretension to beauty, and was, therefore, unlikely to attract the notice of the fashionable gallants of the day. A curious anecdote is related by a contemporary chronicler. The actress was dining in company with D'Alembert, a member of the Academy, and Mdlle. Gaussin, when the former, whose talent for mimicry was well known, was solicited by the host to give them a specimen of his ability. "Let us see," he said, "if the two ladies present can inspire you." The academician, by no means unwilling to accept the challenge, proceeded to copy the voice and manner of Mdlle. Gaussin so successfully that the party were convulsed with laughter; and then came the turn of Dumesnil. Before he had recited more than three or four lines with appropriate gestures, the actress started from her chair. "There it is," she exclaimed, "my left arm, my unlucky left arm! For the last ten years I have been striving to render it as supple as the other, and I cannot! It will hang as stiff as an icicle, and he," pointing to D'Alembert, and involuntarily assuming her most tragic tone, "he has found it out!" Yet this slight infirmity, which to any one but D'Alambert would have passed unnoticed, was the only thing stiff about her acting; for with mobility

of feature she combined remarkable flexibility of voice and grace of gesture.

Voltaire's Appreciation.

None appreciated her merit more cordially than Voltaire, although, in order not to excite the jealousy of Mdlle. Clairon, with whom it was indispensable for him to be on good terms, he avoided any open manifestation of his preference. His *Mérope* was written expressly for Dumesnil, and it is recorded that, during the first rehearsals, she only partially succeeded in satisfying him, her conception appearing to him deficient in energy. "But, sir," she objected, on his urging her to throw more spirit into the part, "one must be Mérope herself to please you!" "That is precisely what I wish you to be," coolly replied Voltaire. However, when the decisive night arrived, he had no reason to complain of any tameness on the part of the actress; for never had she been more touchingly pathetic, more incomparably sublime. The effect of her performance was heightened by a happy innovation, which no actor had as yet ventured to attempt. In the scene where Mérope reveals the secret of Egisthus' birth, and thus stays the tyrant's arm about to strike him, Dumesnil darted across the stage in a transport of maternal anguish, threw herself before her son and strove to shield him from the impending blow. This inspiration, rapturously applauded by the audience, was regarded by Voltaire as a masterpiece of art. "Mérope," he said, "is no longer mine, it belongs of right to Mdlle. Dumesnil."

Besides the characters already cited, we may mention among her most successful personations Zulime, Hécube in *Les Troyens*, and Semiramis. Her attempts in comedy were few; but two of them, says a contemporary writer, would have sufficed to insure the celebrity of any actress—*La Gouvernante* and Léonide in *Ésope à la Cour*. In the last years of her stage career she limited her performances to her three favorite parts, Mérope, Clytemnestre and Semiramis, retiring at the close of the theatrical season in 1776. She became entitled to the usual pension from the Comédie of fifteen hundred livres, which was doubled by Louis XVI, a very moderate recompense for an uninterrupted service of thirty-nine years.

Rivalry of Clairon.

The retirement of Dumesnil occasioned no alteration in her ordinary life. She had never cared for social notoriety, nor sought to prolong her prestige as tragedy queen beyond the fall of the curtain. Her attire had always been of the simplest, even during the most brilliant period of her professional career; and of this indifference to admiration the following instance is recorded: In 1770, when Clairon, who had left the stage a few years before, was actively engaged in superintending the début of her favorite pupil Larive, she expressly stipulated that several ladies of the court and other personages of distinction should be allowed to attend the rehearsals, tickets of admission to which bore her own signature. The piece was *Le Comte*

d'Essex, and at the appointed hour the actors arrived, for the most part in full gala costume, in honor of the noble visitors, Clairon surpassing everyone in the splendor of her toilette. Dumesnil, however, with her usual aversion to ceremony, appeared in her everyday dress, and on being reproached for her negligence, replied that she could rehearse better in her jacket than with a long robe trailing behind her. Clairon, who had overheard the remark, smiled sarcastically, and the ladies in the boxes laughed outright; but their insolence by no means disconcerted the object of their merriment, who, on taking her position on the stage, instinctively assumed the air and attitude of Elizabeth, and so electrified her hearers by the intensity of her passion that not only the spectators, but the actors themselves were paralyzed.

In a letter to M. d'Argental, Mdlle. Dumesnil says: "I am naturally simple and confiding, sincere in my friendship and incapable of intrigue, but not without a certain penetration. I was far from suspecting the manœuvres directed against me by my enemies, although their object was to injure my reputation and discourage whatever talent I may possess. I imagined that my manner of living and my punctuality in the performance of my duties would protect me from insult, but I was mistaken. I have suffered long and deeply, but cannot bring myself to employ the same weapons against others which they have not scrupled to use against me." She requests him, in his capacity of "first gentleman of the chamber," to excuse her from playing an insignificant part in one of Voltaire's tragedies.

"You deprive me of the characters best suited to me, and insist on my accepting one which no one else will consent to undertake. Is not this presuming too much on my attachment to you and to M. de Voltaire?"

The Revolution, and the consequent suppression of all government pensions, proved a severe blow to Mdlle. Dumesnil, and during the Reign of Terror she was reduced to a state of absolute indigence. Subsequently, on the establishment of the Consulate, her claims were not forgotten. A lodging in the Palais Royal and a small income were accorded her, and her declining years were passed in comparative ease. She died in 1803.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century a new species of drama arose in France. Its professed aim was to become an agent of social reform; its mission was to diffuse the new gospel of philanthropy. But, in fact, its results, however important in France and other parts of Europe, fell far short of its aim, as stated by its philosophic originator, Diderot. In the language of Madame de Staël it was not nature, but merely the "affectation of nature," which they exhibited. Diderot, however, claimed that he had invented a third dramatic form—the serious, which he considered the consummation of dramatic art. Classical tragedy had been weighted down by artificiality in every direction, and thus made monstrous and rationally inconceivable. The effect of the new plays was intended to spring from their truth to nature, which should bring home its moral teachings to the hearts of all. The theatre was to become a moral school. It was to inculcate the principles of society and of the conduct of life. Though the idea

was not entirely new, being found in the dreams of various social philosophers, no attempt had ever been made to carry it into practice.

Sentimental Plays.

For a time there was a conflict between the enfeebled artistic school and the new tendency which at first was not definitely understood, even by those who took part in it. Beaumarchais, in the beginning of his career, wrote sentimental plays, in imitation of Diderot, which he called vaguely dramas, and this name became the accepted title of the hybrid species to which they belonged. But his later works were of a different kind. The famous *Barbier de Séville* and the *Mariage de Figaro* were simply bold revivals of the old Spanish comedy of intrigue. He not only surpassed all his predecessors in the skillful framing of plots, but he drew his characters with a truth of nature peculiar to himself. Furthermore, the dialogue was brilliant with flashes of wit, and both action and dialogue conveyed political and social meanings. In consequence of its searchlight illumination of the old régime, his *Figaro* may be regarded as a herald of the French Revolution.

The Theatre Under the First Empire.

But the plays of Beaumarchais could not suit the rule of the despot who fully understood their political significance. Under the Empire comedy became chiefly a harmless treatment of manners. The theatre shared in

all the movements and changes which ensued in France, but the revolution which the drama itself was destined to undergo was not one of native origin. Vaudeville was merely an interspersion of pantomime with the airs of popular songs; the operetta was a miniature opera, originally of the pastoral species, and melodrama became merely a drama accentuated by music.

But at the chief home of the drama none of these supplementary branches were admitted. At the Comédie Française, whose history as that of a single company of actors had begun in 1680, the party strife of the times made itself audible. The most prominent tragic poet of the Revolution, M. J. de Chénier, wrote for the national stage in his *Charles IX* or *École des Rois*, an historical drama with a political moral, in which, in 1789, Talma achieved his first complete success. The Revolution proclaimed among other liberties that of the theatres in Paris, of which soon no less than fifty were open; but in 1807 the empire restricted the number to nine and reinstated the Français in sole possession, or nearly so, of the right of performing the classic drama. No writer of note was tempted or inspired by the rewards and other encouragements offered by Napoleon to produce a classic tragedy.

The French are a nation of artists, and are as much at home in the dramatic as in other forms of art. The drama is perhaps the medium best suited for the expression of certain qualities peculiar to the French. Chief among their national characteristics are a lively wit, a love of effect for its own sake, a gift for composing beautiful sentiments and expressing brilliant ideas,

and a love of order, symmetry and clearness. These are precious qualities in the dramatist, and just as they contributed their share toward the beauty of the comedy and tragedy which amused and moved the people of Paris and the court of the king Louis XIV, so they have helped to make the drama of France what it now is.

Decadence of the Drama.

Slowly and surely the desire to do nothing outside of the rules, or in any way indecorous, was choking all life out of the theatre. As Saintsbury aptly puts it, "Each piece was expected to resemble something else, and originality was regarded as a mark of bad taste and insufficient culture." The French drama of the opening years of the nineteenth century is the empty echo of a hollow past. Its aim was to equal Voltaire; Voltaire had admiringly copied Racine; Racine had sought to reproduce in French the tragedy of the Greeks as he saw it, chiefly through the medium of the Latin adaptations; and thus there was imitation of imitations, almost without end. "French tragedy," said Goethe, "is a parody of itself." If the great critic thought this of the tragedy of Voltaire, what must he have thought of the tragedy of Voltaire's feeble followers?

The Dramatic Unities.

The hall-mark of a tragedy, according to the rules, was the blind obedience paid to the unities. The French critics pretended to derive from Aristotle a law that a

dramatic poem should show one action happening in one place in the space of one day; these were the unities of action, place and time. As to the unity of action, there need be no dispute; any work of art must have a single distinct motive and mainspring. But both the unity of time, which compelled the hurried massing of all the straggling incidents of a tale into the course of twenty-four hours or less, and the unity of place, which forbade all change of scene—these were absurdities. In 1629 a Frenchman, Mairet, had brought out at Rouen an imitation of Trissino's *Sofonisba*, in which the three unities appeared for the first time. Corneille early gave in his adhesion to the principle, but found it hard to reconcile his practice. Although the Italians and French supposed that they were imitating the ancients, it is a fact that the unities of time and place were not considered among the Greek tragedians as a principle, nor does Aristotle lay them down as laws. He says nothing at all as to the unity of place; and in speaking of the unity of time he probably meant merely to declare the habitual practice among the best dramatists. It is safe to say that Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides never gave a thought to either unity of time or unity of place. By accident, and because of the physical conditions of the Greek theatre, they had to condense their story as much as they could, and to be sparing of change of scene. That they did not hesitate to shift the place of action when it suited their purpose there can be no doubt, and of this there are many instances, as in the *Hecuba* of Euripides and the *Eumenides* of Æschylus. Moreover, the laws which Aristotle lays down in the

third century B. C. were not intended to apply to the French drama more than twenty centuries later.

The French and the Classic Drama.

The simplicity, the directness and, above all, the unconsciousness to which the Greek drama owed so much of its poetry and its power, were qualities wholly foreign to the French court of Louis XIV, and they were neither appreciated there, nor in the main even understood. The severity and stately dignity of the Greek drama, in great part the result of the circumstances under which it was acted, were foreign to the turbulent and fiery tragedy of Corneille, produced under wholly different conditions and in a wholly altered state of society, with far more complex emotions. The Greek actor, raised aloft on his buskins, and speaking through a resonant mask, that he might be seen and heard by the vast multitude seated before him in the open amphitheatre, was prevented from all violent action, and compelled to assume a certain stateliness. But the French actor, in the rich and elaborate costume of his own time, declaimed his verses in a small hall, before a select audience, many of whom had seats upon the stage, crowding the performers into a narrow lane between rows of spectators and into a narrow space between these spectators and the foot-lights. To attempt to reproduce, under these conditions, the massive dignity of the Greek stage, was to attempt the impossible. At best the result would be literary merely, and not lifelike. It is not to be denied that the regularity and concentration imposed

on the dramatist by the observance of the three unities may at times have helped the writer of genius, who is but the stronger for the difficulties he struggles with; the feeble, however, were made more feeble still; and even a writer of genius like Corneille chafed against rigid restrictions which he was not flexible enough to overcome. It is pitiful to see how the virile and vigorous Corneille, in his three discourses on dramatic composition, humbles himself before the shadow of Aristotle and the ancients, and begs to be allowed to stretch the "single day" to, say, thirty hours, and to take as the "single place" a whole town, in different parts of which the action may go on. How the bonds hampered the poet is summed up concisely in the judgment which the Academy, at Richelieu's order, passed on Corneille's *Cid*—that the poet, in endeavoring to observe the rules of art, had chosen rather to sin against those of nature and common-sense.

The Drama of Racine and Voltaire.

Racine's calmer genius worked without revolt under the rules which pinioned Corneille; he found his account in them. To him his characters were of first importance, and what they felt and thought and said; whereas Corneille was concerned chiefly with the action, and with what his people did—what they might have to say was of less interest. When action was proscribed, and little was done, and everything was talked about, Corneille chafed against the tightening bonds; but Racine seemed to dance best in fetters. And as Racine

came after Corneille, and became the foremost tragic writer of the magnificent court of Louis XIV, the courtly graces with which he had endowed tragedy were afterward inseparable from it. So the frank and free-spoken drama of Corneille gave way before the fine-lady muse of Racine—not any weaker, it may be, but more polished and mannered. The twist once given, French tragic drama turned more and more away from nature, and became more and more artificial and barren. Later came Voltaire, who was never tired of finding fault with Corneille and had nothing but praise for Racine. He gave in to the pseudo-unities of time and place, although with characteristic ingenuity he evaded them, while pretending to be bound by them. Voltaire even refined on his predecessor. He had a horror of the colloquial; he screwed dramatic diction two or three turns higher, and still further from nature. For his fastidious taste even Greek tragedy was too simple and too familiar. He never by any chance allowed to pass one of those homely words which reach the heart so readily; these were banished, and a dignified periphrasis took their place.

Voltaire, after all, was a man of genius, however false his doctrines, and the full feebleness of which French tragedy was capable, when it was made according to his precepts, was evident only after his death and in the works of his followers—men of very moderate talent, just able to copy correctly the faults of their elders and betters. In their hands the tragic drama lost what little life it had left, and the red heels of Racine lengthened into unmistakable stilts. There were not wanting those who now and then inveighed against long monologues,

the two false unities, and the device of confidants; but the admirers of "dignity and correctness" made a firm front against these barbarians. As time went on, tragedy went from bad to worse. Even in the days of the Revolution, even in the carnage of 1793, the Théâtre Français continues to bring forth vapid and innocuous classical tragedies. With the return of order and the subsequent worship of republican Greece and Rome, the so-called classic drama got the benefit of the craze for antiquity.

CRISPIN, RIVAL OF HIS MASTER

(CRISPIN, RIVAL DE SON MAITRE)

BY

LE SAGE

(*Translated by W. H. H. Chambers.*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M. ORONTE, citizen of Paris.
MADAM ORONTE, his Wife.
ANGÉLIQUE, their Daughter, promised to Damis.
VALÈRE, lover of Angélique.
M. ORGON, Father of Damis.
LISETTE, Angélique's maid.
CRISPIN, Valère's valet.
LABRANCHE, Damis' valet.

Crispin, Rival of His Master.

ARGUMENT.

Valère loves Angélique, daughter of M. and Madam Oronte, and is loved in return. He learns from Lisette, the maid, that Angélique is promised in marriage to Damis, son of M. Orgon, and that the wedding is to take place upon the arrival of father and son, who are expected at any moment. Crispin, valet of Valère, meets an old friend, Labranche, and learns from him that he has become Damis' valet and has come to Paris to withdraw the word of M. Orgon, as Damis was shortly before forced to marry a girl at Chartres, where he resides. Crispin concocts a scheme to pass himself off as Damis, to marry Angélique and to abscond with the dowry, of which he promises one-half to Labranche. M. Orgon, however, deciding, after the departure of Labranche from Chartres, to go himself to Paris, comes unexpectedly upon the scene, and notwithstanding the various clever manœuvres of the two valets, finally meets Oronte, whereupon all is discovered. Valère marries Angélique, and amid the attendant happiness the rascally valets are pardoned.

Scene:—Paris in the street before the house of M. Oronte.

Valère.—Ah! you here, you scamp?

Crispin.—Let's talk without getting our dander up.

Val.—Scoundrel!

Cris.—Don't mention, I beg you, our accomplishments.—What do you complain of?

Val.—What do I complain of, villain? You asked for a week's holiday and I haven't seen you for more than a month. Is this the way a valet should serve his master?

Cris.—Zounds! I serve you, sir, as you pay me; it would seem that one has no more reason to complain than the other.

Val.—I'd like to know where you come from anyway?

Cris.—I've just returned from trying to make my fortune. I've been on a little expedition in Touraine with a chevalier—one of my friends.

Val.—What sort of an expedition?

Cris.—To collect a tax he levies on provincials, by the manner of his play.

Val.—Then you arrive quite apropos as I'm entirely without ready cash and you must have money to loan.

Cris.—No, sir. Our catch was not lucky; the fish saw the hook and wouldn't swallow the bait.

Val.—What a pretty banker, this fellow! Listen, Crispin, I'm willing to pardon the past, I need your cleverness.

Cris.—What magnanimity!

Val.—I'm in a terrible fix.

Cris.—Are your creditors growing impatient? That big merchant, for whom you signed a nine hundred franc note, in return for the thirty pistoles of stuff he furnished you, has he obtained judgment?

Val.—No.

Cris.—Ah! I have it now. That generous marquise who went herself to pay your tailor, who had sued you, has discovered that it was a put-up job?

Val.—No such trifle, Crispin; I'm in love.

Cris.—Ho! Ho!—with whom, perchance?

Val.—With Angélique, the only daughter of Monsieur Oronte.

Cris.—I know her by sight. Deucedly pretty girl, too. Her father, I believe, is that very rich fellow who lives in yonder house.

Val.—Yes, he has three large houses in the finest quarters in Paris.

Cris.—How worthy of adoration, this Angélique!

Val.—He's said, besides, to have plenty of ready money.

Cris.—Now I fully realize your excessive love.—But how are you getting on with the girl? Does she know anything about your passion?

Val.—For a week or so I've had free access to her father's house and I've done so nicely that she already looks on me with favoring eyes. Lisette, the maid, however, told me a bit of news yesterday that weighs upon my heart.

Cris.—And what did she tell you, this heart-weighter Lisette?

Val.—That I have a rival, a young man from the provinces, to whom Monsieur Oronte has pledged his word; the young fellow is to arrive almost immediately at Paris to marry Angélique.

Cris.—Ah! and who is this rival?

Val.—That's just what I haven't learned yet; they called Lisette while she was telling me this despairing news, and I was obliged to leave without the name.

Cris.—It rather looks as if we were not to become proprietors at once of those three houses in the finest quarters of Paris.

Val.—Go see Lisette for me, and have a chat with her; we'll build our plan accordingly.

Cris.—Trust that to me.

Val.—I'll await you at our lodging. (He leaves.)

Cris.—(Alone.) How tired I am of being a valet.—Ah! Crispin you're alone at fault. You've always been a sport and chased baubles; you must be a financier—with the wit and

cleverness you have, by gad! you might already have failed several times.

Enter Labranche.

Labranche.—(Aside.) Isn't that Crispin?

Crispin.—(Aside.) By gad, that looks like Labranche.

Lab.—(Aside.) It's Crispin, Crispin himself.

Cris.—(Aside.) It's Labranche, I'd stake my life upon it. (Aloud.) What a lucky meeting! Let me embrace you, my dear fellow; to be entirely frank, not seeing you any longer in Paris, I feared that some judge's sentence had carried you off.

Lab.—Upon my faith, old friend, I've had a narrow shave since I saw you last. They wished to give me occupation at sea; I thought I would be one of that last detachment for the galleys.

Cris.—Holy smoke! What the deuce did you do?

Lab.—One night I took it into my head to stop, in an out-of-the-way place, a stranger to inquire, purely out of curiosity, the news of his land. He was unacquainted with French and thought I demanded his purse. He cried: Help! thief! The watch came, they took me for a knave and led me to prison. I was there seven weeks.

Cris.—Seven weeks!

Lab.—Yes, and I should have been there yet if it had not been for the niece of an old-clothes woman.

Cris.—Is that so?

Lab.—They were tremendously prejudiced against me, but this good friend of mine moved so vigorously in the interest of my case, that she made known my innocence.

Cris.—It's well to have lusty, vigorous friends.

Lab.—This adventure has caused me to reflect.

Cris.—I believe you. You are no longer curious to learn the news of foreign lands?

Lab.—Heavens and earth! no. I've reëntered service and you, Crispin, still working on your own account?

Cris.—No, I am like yourself, a retired knave. I've reëntered service also, but I serve a master without means,

which implies a valet without wages. I am little content with my position.

Lab.—Well, I'm quite content with mine. I live at Chartres, where I serve a young man named Damis. He's a whole-souled fellow; he loves wine, woman and gambling—an all-around chap—we go on all sorts of debauches together; it amuses and keeps me out of evil ways.

Cris.—What an innocent life!

Lab.—Isn't that a fact?

Cris.—Assuredly. But tell me, Labranche, what brings you to Paris? Where are you going?

Lab.—(Pointing to the house of M. Oronte.) I'm going there.

Cris.—To Monsieur Oronte's house?

Lab.—His daughter is betrothed to Damis.

Cris.—Angélique promised to your master?

Lab.—Monsieur Orgon, the father of Damis, was at Paris a couple of weeks ago and I was with him. We went to see Monsieur Oronte, who is one of his oldest friends, and between them they arranged this marriage.

Cris.—This matter has been fully determined upon?

Lab.—Yes, the contract has been already signed by both fathers and Madam Oronte. The dowry of twenty thousand francs (literally; ecus) in cash is all ready; they await only the arrival of Damis to terminate the thing.

Cris.—Ah! by gad! if that's the case, Valère, my master, has nothing to do but seek fortune elsewhere.

Lab.—What, your master?——

Cris.—He loves this same Angélique; but as Damis——

Lab.—Oh! Damis won't marry Angélique, never fear; there's a little difficulty.

Cris.—What?

Lab.—While his father was marrying him here, he married himself at Chartres.

Cris.—How was that?

Lab.—He loved a young lady, with whom his relations had

been such that, at the return of the good man Orgon, there was a secret meeting of the parents on both sides; she is a girl of good birth and Damis has been obliged to marry her.

Cris.—Well, that puts a different face on the matter.

Lab.—I found the wedding clothes of my master already made and am ordered to take them to Chartres as soon as I have seen Monsieur and Madam Oronte and withdrawn the word of Monsieur Orgon.

Cris.—Withdrawn the word of Monsieur Orgon?

Lab.—This principally brings me to Paris.—I won't say good-bye, Crispin, we shall meet again.

Cris.—Wait a moment, Labranche, wait, my friend. An idea strikes me; tell me, is your master known to Monsieur Oronte?

Lab.—They have never seen each other.

Cris.—Holy smoke! if you are willing we can make a ten-strike—but after your late adventure, I fear you lack courage.

Lab.—No, no; you have but to tell me. One tempest doesn't prevent a good sailor from reëmbarking. Speak out, what's the idea? To make your master pass for Damis and to marry him to——

Cris.—My master? For shame! He's a pretty beggar for a girl like Angélique! I've chosen a better party.

Lab.—Who, then?

Cris.—Myself.

Lab.—The devil! You're right, though, and the scheme is not badly contrived, at least.

Cris.—I love her also.

Lab.—I authorize your love.

Cris.—I will take the name of Damis.

Lab.—Well said.

Cris.—I will marry Angélique.

Lab.—You have my consent.

Cris.—I'll receive the dowry.

Lab.—That's good.

Cris.—And I'll disappear before the matter is cleared up.

Lab.—I'd like a little more light on that last point.

Cris.—Why?

Lab.—You spoke of disappearing with the dowry, without mentioning me; that plan evidently needs a little correcting.

Cris.—Oh, we'll disappear together.

Lab.—With this as a condition, I'll serve as your croupier —'Tis a bold stroke I admit, but my audacity reawakens and I feel that I am born for great things. Where shall we go to conceal the dowry?

Cris.—In the depths of some far-away province.

Lab.—I believe it would be safer outside of the kingdom altogether, don't you?

Cris.—We'll see about that later on.—But tell me something of the character of Monsieur Oronte.

Lab.—He's a stupid sort of a fellow—fat-witted.

Cris.—And Madam Oronte?

Lab.—A woman of from twenty-five to sixty, who loves herself; a woman with a mind so uncertain and inconstant that she believes at the same moment both the pros and the cons.

Cris.—That's enough. Now I must borrow some clothes for——

Lab.—You can use my master's—yes, it so happens, you're about the same build.

Cris.—By gad, he's not badly made!

Lab.—I see some one coming out of Monsieur Oronte's house. Let us go to the inn where I lodge, to arrange the details of our enterprise.

Cris.—First I must run to my lodging to speak to Valère and induce him by a pretended disclosure to stay away from Monsieur Oronte's for several days. I shall join you shortly. (He leaves at one side and Labranche at the other.)

Enter Angélique and Lisette.

Angélique.—Yes, Lisette, since Valère declared his passion, I have been consumed by a secret chagrin, and I feel that if I marry Damis it will cost me my life's repose.

Lisette.—What a dangerous fellow, this Valère!

Ang.—How unfortunate I am! Put yourself in my place, Lisette, and counsel me I beg you. What ought I to do?

Lis.—What counsel can I offer?

Ang.—That inspired by the interest you take in all that concerns me.

Lis.—Two kinds of counsel only can I offer you, the one: to forget Valère; the other: to brace yourself against paternal authority. You're too much in love to follow the first, and my conscience is too tender to offer you the second. It's very embarrassing, as you see.

Ang.—Ah! Lisette, you drive me to despair.

Lis.—But wait.—It seems to me that perhaps we may be able to reconcile your love and my conscience.—Yes, go to your mother.

Ang.—And tell her?

Lis.—Everything; confess freely. She loves to be flattered and caressed; flatter and caress her. You may depend she loves you, and will perhaps oblige your father to withdraw his word.

Ang.—You're doubtless right, Lisette, but I fear——

Lis.—What?

Ang.—You know my mother; she's so changeable.

Lis.—It's true she always is of the same opinion as the last one that speaks, but never mind, we'll win her to our side anyway—oh! I see her—go for a moment and come back when I signal. (Angélique retires to the background.)

Enter Madam Oronte.

Lisette.—(Pretending not to see Madam Oronte.) It must be admitted that Madam Oronte is one of the most charming women in Paris.

Madam Oronte.—You are very complimentary, Lisette.

Lis.—Ah! Madam, I did not see you. Those words were the continuation of a conversation I have just had with Mademoiselle Angélique regarding her marriage. You have, I told her, the most judicious of mothers, the most reasonable,

Madam Oron.—In truth, Lisette, I little resemble other women; reason always decides my judgments.

Lis.—Undoubtedly.

Madam Oron.—I'm neither obstinate nor capricious.

Lis.—And withal the best mother in the world. Why, I wager that if your daughter felt the slightest repugnance to marry Damis you would not constrain her inclination.

Madam Oron.—I constrain her? I annoy my daughter? God forbid that I should do the least violence to her feelings! Tell me, Lisette, does she feel an aversion to Damis?

Lis.—Ah, but——

Madam Oron.—Conceal nothing from me.

Lis.—Since you wish to know everything, Madam, I must admit that she does feel repugnance for this marriage.

Madam Oron.—Perhaps she has fallen in love with another?

Lis.—Oh! Madam, that's the rule; when a girl feels an aversion to the man chosen for her husband, that always indicates an inclination for another. You have told me, for instance, that you hated Monsieur Oronte the first time he was proposed, because you loved an officer who died at the siege of Candia.

Madam Oron.—It is true; and if this poor fellow had not been dead I should never have married Monsieur Oronte.

Lis.—Well, Madam, your daughter is of exactly the same mind that you were before the siege of Candia.

Madam Oron.—And who is then the cavalier who has discovered how to please her?

Lis.—It is that young nobleman, who, for a week or more, has been coming to play at our house.

Madam Oron.—Who, Valère?

Lis.—Valère himself.

Madam Oron.—That reminds me that yesterday he looked at us, Angélique and me, with eyes so full of passion.—Are you sure Lisette, quite sure that it is my daughter he loves?

Lis.—(Beckoning Angélique.) Yes, Madam, he told me so himself, and charged me to ask permission for him to come to beg of you her hand,

Angélique.—(Coming forward.) Pardon me, Madam, if my feelings do not conform to yours; but you know——

Madam Oron.—I know quite well that a girl does not always regulate the movements of her heart according to her parents' wishes; but I am tender, I am good, I share your pains; in brief, I consent to Valère's addresses.

Ang.—I cannot find words, Madam, to express my gratitude.

Lis.—It is hardly enough, Madam. Monsieur Oronte is rather stubborn, and if you do not maintain vigorously——

Madam Oron.—Oh! rest easy on that point. I take Valère under my special protection; my daughter shall have no other husband but him and, remember, I say so (seeing M. Oronte coming). But my husband comes. You shall now see in what a strain I talk to him.

Enter M. Oronte.

Madam Oronte.—You come quite apropos, Monsieur; I desire to inform you that it is no longer my intention to marry my daughter to Damis.

M. Oronte.—Ah! and may I inquire, Madam, why you have changed your mind?

Madam Oron.—Because a better match offers. Valère asks for her hand. It is true he is not so rich as Damis, but he is a nobleman and we can pardon his narrow means in favor of his rank.

Lisette.—(Aside.) Good!

M. Oron.—I esteem Valère, and without paying any attention to his light purse I would willingly give him my daughter if I could do so with honor; but it cannot be, Madam.

Madam Oron.—And why, I should like to know?

M. Oron.—Why? Do you wish us to break our word to our old friend, Monsieur Orgon? Has he given you cause for complaint?

Madam Oron.—No.

Lis.—(Whispering to Madam Oronte.) Courage, don't give in!

M. Oron.—Why, then, insult him in this way? Remember

the contract is signed, the preparations are finished and we await only Damis. We have gone too far to retract, have we not?

Madam Oron.—Really, I had not thought of all these matters.

Lis.—(Aside.) Good-bye! the weather-vane is shifting!

M. Oron.—You are too sensible, Madam, to oppose this marriage.

Madam Oron.—Oh! I don't oppose it at all.

Lis.—(Aside.) Heavens and earth! is that a woman? she don't contradict.

Madam Oron.—You see, Lisette, I have done all in my power for Valère.

Lis.—Yes, truly, he is indeed a specially well protected lover.

M. Oron.—(Seeing Labranche coming.) But I perceive Damis' valet.

Enter Labranche.

Labranche.—Your very humble servant, Monsieur and Madam Oronte.—Servant most humble, Mademoiselle Angélique.—Good day, Lisette.

M. Oronte.—Well, any news, Labranche?

Lab.—Monsieur Damis, your son-in-law and my master, has just arrived at the inn from Chartres; he follows me almost immediately; I have hurried on to announce him.

Angélique.—(Aside.) Oh, heavens!

M. Oron.—I've been anxiously awaiting him—but why didn't he come straight to my house? Considering our close relations, ought he not to drop all ceremony?

Lab.—Ah! Monsieur, he is too well bred to act so familiarly with you. He is the best mannered gentleman in all France; although I am his valet, I can say nothing but good of him.

Madam Oronte.—Is he polished? Is he sage?

Lab.—Is he sage, Madam? why, he was raised among the gilded youth of Paris. By gad, he's long-headed.

M. Oron.—And Monsieur Orgon, is he not with him?

Lab.—No, Monsieur, a sharp attack of gout prevented his setting off.

M. Oron.—The poor old fellow!

Lab.—Yes, it seized him suddenly on the eve of our departure—here is a letter he wrote you.

M. Oron.—(Taking the letter and reading the superscription.) "To M. Gabble, Doctor of Medicine, Sepulcher street."

Lab.—(Taking the letter.) Oh! that isn't the one, Monsieur.

M. Oron.—(Laughing.) That doctor resides in the same quarter as his patients.

Lab.—(Drawing from his pockets some letters.) I have several letters to deliver—Let me see. (He reads), "To M. Sputter, lawyer, False-witness street."—Oh! that isn't it. (He reads.) "To M. Gluttonton, canon of"—Pshaw! shall I never find it? (He reads.) "To M. Oronte"—Ah! here's the letter of M. Orgon—his hand trembled so when he wrote that you'll hardly recognize his writing.

M. Oron.—In truth I should not have recognized it.

Lab.—Gout is a terrible disease—may heaven preserve you from it, as well as Madam Oronte, Mademoiselle Angélique, Lisette and all the rest of the company!

M. Oron.—(Opening the letter and reading.) "I was nearly ready to leave with Damis when an attack of gout seized me and prevented. Nevertheless as my presence is not absolutely necessary at Paris, I do not desire my indisposition to retard a marriage so dear to my heart and the sole consolation of my old age. I send you my son; act the father to him as to your daughter. I shall be well content with all you do. From Chartres; Your affectionate friend, Orgon." How I pity him! (Seeing Crispin dressed in Damis' clothes.) But who is this young man coming? Is it perchance Damis?

Lab.—Damis himself. (To Madam Oronte.) What do you think of him, Madam? hasn't he a prepossessing air?

Madam Oron.—Oh! he's fairly attractive.

Enter Crispin.

Crispin.—(To Labranche, pointing to M. Oronte.) Is this M. Oronte, my illustrious father-in-law?

Labranche.—Yes, you see before you the self-same original gentleman.

M. Oronte.—(Throwing his arms around Crispin.) Welcome, thrice welcome, my son, embrace me.

Cris.—(Embracing M. Oronte.) I am extremely joyous to be able to testify my great happiness by embracing you. (Pointing to Madam Oronte.) Doubtless this is the charming girl who is to be given me in marriage.

M. Oron.—No, my son, that is my wife; here is my daughter Angélique.

Cris.—Zounds! What a fine family! I should be quite willing to accept one as wife the other as mistress.

Madam Oronte.—That's too gallant by half! (Whispering to Lisette.) He seems to be a witty fellow, Lisette.

Lis.—(Whispering.) Has good taste, too.

Cris.—(To Madam Oronte.) What air! what grace! what noble presence! by gad! Madam, you are charming—adorable. My father well said: You'll see Madam Oronte, she is the most piquant beauty——

Madam Oron.—Fie! for shame!

Cris.—The most disag—I wish, he said, she were a widow, I'd marry her quick.

M. Oron.—(Laughing.) I'm much obliged to him, I'm sure.

Madam Oron.—(To Crispin.) I esteem your father very highly; how sorry I am he could not come with you.

Cris.—No more sorry than he is, not to be able to come to the wedding. He promised himself the pleasure of dancing with Madam Oronte.

Lab.—(To M. Oronte.) He begs you to end the marriage ceremonies quickly, for he is extremely anxious to have his daughter-in-law near him.

M. Oron.—Well, the conditions are entirely arranged be-

tween us and signed, we've nothing left but to end the thing and count the dowry.

Cris.—Count the dowry?—yes, very well said—Labranche, (to M. Oronte) kindly permit me to give an order to my servant. (To Labranche.) Go to the Marquis—(whispering) skip out and arrange for the horses to-night—you understand me? (aloud) and present my compliments.

Lab.—I fly, sir. (He leaves.)

M. Oron.—(To Crispin.) But to return to your father: I am truly sorry to learn of his indisposition, but satisfy, I pray you, my curiosity: tell me the latest news regarding his law-suit.

Cris.—(Embarrassed, calling.) Labranche.

M. Oron.—You seem much affected; what's the matter?

Cris.—(Aside.) Devil take the question! (To M. Oronte.) I forgot to order Labranche to— (Aside.) He ought to have had sense enough to have spoken of that law-suit.

M. Oron.—Well, has the suit finally come to judgment?

Cris.—Yes, thank God! the thing is ended.

M. Oron.—And you have won?

Cris.—With costs.

M. Oron.—I'm delighted, I assure you.

Madam Oron.—Heaven be praised!

Cris.—My father was all wrapped up in this affair, he would have given all his wealth to the judges, rather than lose it.

M. Oron.—Upon my faith it must have cost him a pretty penny, didn't it?

Cris.—I warrant you. But justice is such a fine thing that it cannot be bought at too high a price.

M. Oron.—I agree with you; but besides the money, this suit must have cost him a lot of trouble?

Cris.—Oh, an inconceivable amount. His adversary was the most quarrelsome and the least reasonable of all men.

M. Oron.—Of all men? what are you talking about? He told me his opponent was a woman.

Cris.—Oh! yes, his opponent was a woman, I grant, but this woman had a certain old Norman, who counselled her: it was this man that gave my father so much trouble—but let's change the subject of our discourse and drop law-suits: I wish to think only of my marriage and the pleasure I feel when looking at Madam Oronte.

M. Oron.—Very well, my son, let us go in. I wish to give my last orders concerning the marriage preparations.

Cris.—(Offering his hand to Madam Oronte.) Madam.

Madam Oron.—(To Angélique.) You are not to be pitied, my daughter; Damis has his good points. (M. and Madam Oronte with Crispin leave.)

Angélique.—Alas! what shall become of me?

Lisette.—Oh! you're about to become the wife of M. Damis: that isn't difficult to guess.

Ang.—(Crying.) Ah! Lisette, you know my feelings, sympathize with me.

Lis.—(Also crying.) My poor child!

Ang.—You will not be so merciless as to abandon me to my fate?

Lis.—You break my heart!

Ang.—Lisette, my dear Lisette.

Lis.—Say no more; I am so affected that I might give you some mischievous advice and you are so vexed that you might follow it.

Enter Valère.

Valère.—(Does not see them.) Crispin told me not to show myself here for several days, because he contemplated a stratagem, but he did not explain its nature and I cannot live in this uncertainty.

Lisette.—(Seeing Valère.) Valère is coming.

Val.—(Seeing Angélique.) I'm not mistaken—it is she. Beautiful Angélique, I pray you, tell me yourself, my destiny: what result may I expect?—but, what! you are both crying?

Lis.—Yes, Monsieur, we weep—and we despair; your rival has come.

Val.—What do I hear?

Lis.—And this very night he marries my mistress.

Val.—Great heavens!

Lis.—If she were only to remain in Paris, after her marriage, it might not be so bad: you could then sometimes weep together over your misfortune; but to crown your woes you will be obliged to weep separately.

Val.—It will kill me—but Lisette, who is this happy rival that carries off all that I have in the world most dear?

Lis.—His name is Damis. He comes from Chartres.

Val.—I know that section of the country well, and I never heard of any Damis except the son of M. Orgon.

Lis.—It is precisely the son of M. Orgon that is your rival.

Val.—Oh! if we have no one but this Damis to fear we may rest easy.

Angélique.—What are you saying, Valère?

Val.—We can stop worrying at once, charming Angélique. Damis was married a week ago at Chartres.

Lis.—Good!

Ang.—You delude yourself, Valère; Damis is here preparing for the marriage.

Lis.—(To Valère.) At this very moment he is in the house with Madam and M. Oronte.

Val.—Damis is one of my friends; less than a week ago he wrote me; I have his letter at home.

Ang.—And what did he tell you?

Val.—That he had secretly married at Chartres a girl of rank.

Lis.—Secretry married? Ho! ho! we must look into this affair a little—it seems to me to be well worth the trouble. Go, Monsieur, go fetch that letter and lose no time.

Val.—I shall be back in a moment. (He leaves.)

Lis.—Now, we must not neglect to use this news, for I'm very much mistaken if we can not reap some advantage from it; 'twill serve at least to delay your marriage awhile. (Seeing M. Oronte.) I see Monsieur Oronte coming. While I am tell-

ing him, you run in and share the tidings with your mother. (Angélique leaves.)

Enter M. Oronte.

M. Oronte.—Valère just left, did he not, Lisette?

Lisette.—Yes, Monsieur. He came to tell us something that, upon my word, will surprise you.

M. Oron.—Well, what?

Lis.—Believe me, this Damis is a pretty fellow, to want two wives, when so many honest men are extremely sorry to have one.

M. Oron.—Explain yourself, Lisette.

Lis.—Damis is married; he secretly married at Chartres a well-born girl.

M. Oron.—Fine news! How can that be, Lisette?

Lis.—Nevertheless, nothing is more true, Monsieur. Damis himself sent the news to Valère, who is one of his friends.

M. Oron.—It's a fairy tale, I tell you.

Lis.—No, Monsieur, I assure you it is not. Valère has gone to get the letter; you can see it for yourself.

M. Oron.—Once more I tell you I cannot believe it.

Lis.—Ah! Monsieur, why cannot you believe it? The young people of to-day, are they not likely to do anything?

M. Oron.—They are more dissolute, it is true, than they were in my time.

Lis.—How do we know that this Damis is not one of those scoundrels on a small scale, who do not scruple to accept a plurality of dowries? However, as he married a girl of rank, the secret wedding is sure to be followed by consequences not at all agreeable to you.

M. Oron.—Still, I suppose what you say might be worth a little attention.

Lis.—What! a little attention? If I were in your place, before I'd trust my daughter in his hands I'd clear up the whole matter.

M. Oron.—Perhaps you're right; but I see his valet coming. I'll slyly sound him. Go, Lisette, and leave me alone with him.

Lis.—(Aside.) May the news be confirmed!

Enter Labranche.

M. Oronte.—Come here, Labranche—come closer. You have every appearance of an honest man.

Labranche.—Oh! Monsieur, without egotism, I am more honest than I appear.

M. Oron.—I'm glad to hear it; listen, your master strikes me as quite a ladies' man.

Lab.—By gad! he's a gay bird! All the women go crazy over him; he has a certain free and easy air which charms them.—Monsieur Orgon, by marrying him, insures the tranquillity of thirty families at the very least.

M. Oron.—As he is that sort of a fellow, I do not wonder that he took advantage of a well-born girl.

Lab.—What's that you say?

M. Oron.—My friend, you must confess the truth. I know everything; I know that Damis is married; and I know that he married a girl at Chartres.

Lab.—(Aside.) Phew!

M. Oron.—Ah! you are confused.—I see I have been told the truth; you are a knave.

Lab.—I a knave, Monsieur?

M. Oron.—Yes, you; you are a scoundrel. I'm fully informed of your scheme and I intend to have you punished as an accomplice.

Lab.—What scheme, Monsieur? May I die if I understand——

M. Oron.—You feign ignorance, you rascal; but if you do not immediately make a clean breast of the whole thing, I shall turn you over to the officers of justice.

Lab.—Do as you please, Monsieur, I have nothing to confess. I rack my brains in vain; I cannot imagine what cause for complaint you could have against me.

M. Oron.—Ah! then you are not willing to confess? Hello there! someone—bring me an officer.

Lab.—Wait, Monsieur, not so loud. Entirely innocent as I am, you assume an air that embarrasses me. Come, let us coolly straighten out the matter. Now, who told you that my master was married?

M. Oron.—Who? he told it himself, in a letter to one of his friends, Valère.

Lab.—To Valère, you say?

M. Oron.—Yes, to Valère. What do you say to that?

Lab.—(Laughing.) Nothing. By gad! the trick is clever. (Aside.) Ah! ah! Valère you didn't hit it so badly that time, upon my word!

M. Oron.—Trick? What do you mean by trick?

Lab.—(Laughing.) We were told that sooner or later he'd settle our goose, nor has he failed to try, as you see.

M. Oron.—I see nothing.

Lab.—Oh! you will see; you'll see. In the first place, I wish to inform you that this Valère loves your daughter.

M. Oron.—I am well acquainted with the fact.

Lab.—Lisette promotes his interests; she shares all the plans to make his suit succeed. I'll wager something handsome that it was she that spread this false report. Didn't she tell you?

M. Oron.—She did, it is true.

Lab.—In the confusion which the arrival of my master has thrown them both, what have they done? Simply spread the report that Damis is married. Valère even goes so far as to show a letter supposed to have been received from my master, and all intended, as you can easily see, to defer the marriage of Angélique.

M. Oron.—(Aside.) What he says seems reasonable.

Lab.—And while you are running down this false report, Lisette will win the confidence of her mistress and lead her to take some false step; after which, of course, you cannot longer refuse her to Valère.

M. Oron.—(Aside.) Ho! ho! this reasoning sounds sensible.

Lab.—But, by gad! the biters will be bitten. M. Oronte

is a man of sound intelligence, a man of parts who will not permit himself to be played upon in this manner.

M. Oron.—No, I guess not.

Lab.—You know all the artful dodges, all the wiles and tricks that a lover puts in practice to supplant his rival?

M. Oron.—I warrant you I see plainly that your master is not married. Yet I must admire Valère's clever rascality; he claims to be an intimate friend of Damis, but I wager they do not even know each other.

Lab.—Doubtless—by gad! Monsieur, but you have a penetrating mind; nothing escapes you.

M. Oron.—I'm seldom, very seldom deceived in my conjectures—but I see your master, I shall laugh with him over this pretended marriage. (Laughing.) Ha! ha! ha!

Lab.—(Also laughing.) Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Enter Crispin.

M. Oronte.—(To Crispin.) You little know, my son, what they say of you. My, what a joke! They tell me you are married beyond the shadow of a doubt; that you secretly wedded a girl at Chartres. Ha! ha! ha! isn't that funny?

Labranche.—(Making signs to Crispin.) Ha! ha! ha! ha! nothing funnier.

Crispin.—Ho! ho! ho! ho! never heard anything so funny in my life.

M. Oron.—Another, I've no doubt, would have been foolish enough to have been taken in, but I—well, I guess not.

Lab.—Oh! the devil! M. Oronte is as sharp as a needle.

Cris.—I should like to learn the author of this ridiculous report.

Lab.—Monsieur says that it is a man named Valère.

Cris.—(As though astonished.) Valère? Who is this fellow Valère?

Lab.—(To M. Oronte.) You can plainly see, Monsieur, that he doesn't know him. (To Crispin.) That's the man you know, pard—pardon, perhaps you don't know, who we've been told is your rival.

Cris.—Oh! yes, yes, I remember now; the fellow who is distinguished by small means and large debts, but who has drawn a bead on M. Oronte's daughter and whose creditors are spending their days and nights on their knees, praying for their debtor's success.

M. Oron.—They'll wait, I'll warrant you, they'll wait.

Lab.—He's no fool, this Valère, by gad! he's no fool!

M. Oron.—I'm no blockhead myself, not much, egad—no blockhead, and to prove it I'll go at once to my notary. (He starts to leave, but returns.) Or rather, Damis, I've a new proposition to make you. I agreed with M. Orgon, I admit, to give you twenty thousand francs cash down; but won't you take, instead of this sum, my house in the faubourg Saint-Germain; it cost me a third more to build.

Cris.—Oh! I'm an unusually taking man, I'm told; but between ourselves I'd rather have the ready cash.

Lab.—(To M. Oronte.) The cash, you know, is more portable.

M. Oron.—Assuredly.

Cris.—Yes, you can put it in a valise easier. In truth, there is a farm to be sold near Chartres that I'm very anxious to buy.

Lab.—(To M. Oronte.) Ah! Monsieur, a great bargain. Should you see it you would be charmed.

Cris.—I can get it for twenty-five thousand francs, and I have been assured that it is well worth sixty thousand.

Lab.—At the very least, Monsieur, at the very least; why, without mentioning anything else, there are two ponds on the place where each year they catch fully two thousand francs' worth of suckers.

M. Oron.—(To Crispin.) You must not let such a fine bargain escape. Listen: I have at my notary's fifty thousand francs that I have held in reserve to buy the country-seat of a certain financier who will shortly drop out of sight. I'll give you half.

Cris.—Ah! what generosity! Monsieur Oronte, I shall never forget your kindness: eternal gratitude—my heart—in short, I am so deeply moved——

Lab.—Monsieur Oronte is the phœnix of father's-in-law.

M. Oron.—I'll leave you now to get the money—but first I'll go in the house and tell my wife.

Cris.—Valère's creditors will hang themselves.

M. Oron.—Let them hang! You shall marry my daughter within an hour.

Cris.—(Laughing.) Ha! ha! ha! that will be a capital joke!

Lab.—Yes, yes, very droll indeed! (M. Oronte leaves.)

Cris.—My master must have had an explanation with Angélique, and moreover must be acquainted with Damis.

Lab.—So well acquainted that they write, as you see; but thanks to my care, Monsieur Oronte is prejudiced against Valère, and I trust that we shall have the dowry in our saddle-bags before the old fellow is undeceived.

Cris.—(Seeing Valère coming.) Oh heavens!

Lab.—What's the matter Crispin?

Cris.—My master is coming here.

Lab.—How badly timed for us!

Enter Valère.

Valère.—(At the rear, holding a letter in his hand.) I can with this letter enter Monsieur Oronte's house. (Seeing Crispin whom at first he does not recognize.) But I see a young man. Could it be Damis? I'll go nearer and discover—great heavens! it's Crispin.

Crispin.—Crispin himself. But what the devil are you doing here? Didn't I forbid you to go near the house of Monsieur Oronte? You will destroy all that my clever work has done for you.

Val.—There is no necessity to employ any stratagem for me, my dear Crispin.

Cris.—Why not?

Val.—I know the name of my rival: it is Damis, and I have nothing to fear, for he is married.

Cris.—Damis married? (Pointing to Labranche.) But stop, Monsieur, here is his valet, whom I have interested in your affair, he'll tell you about Damis.

Val.—Can it be possible that he has not written the truth. Then to gain what end did he write me these lines: (He reads.)

"From Chartres.

"I must inform you, my dear friend, that I was married quite recently in this city. I wedded secretly a girl of good family. I shall soon leave for Paris, where I promise you shall learn from my own lips the full details of this marriage.

"DAMIS."

Lab.—Ah, Monsieur, I'm well acquainted with this circumstance. At the time my master wrote you this letter he had in fact mapped out a marriage, but M. Orgon didn't approve the map and gave a considerable sum to the father of the girl to hush the matter up.

Val.—Then Damis is not married?

Lab.—Not much.

Val.—Ah! my good fellows, I implore your help. (To Crispin.) What enterprise have you undertaken, Crispin? You didn't seem willing to inform me when I asked you not long ago. Keep me no longer in this uncertainty. But why this disguise? What do you mean to do for me?

Cris.—Your rival has not yet arrived at Paris; he will not be here for a couple of days; before this time I hope to disgust M. and Madam Oronte with the alliance.

Val.—In what way?

Cris.—By passing as Damis. I have already done many extravagant things; I talk utter nonsense. My ridiculous actions shock constantly the father and mother of Angélique. You know the character of Madam Oronte; she loves flattery; well, I disparage her in language which a man about town would scarcely use to one of the frail sisterhood.

Val.—So far, so good—and?

Cris.—And I shall continue to do and to say so many foolish things that before night I mean to be driven from their house—then they'll resolve to give you Angélique.

Val.—Does Lisette enter into this scheme?

Cris.—Yes, Monsieur, we work hand in hand.

Val.—Ah! Crispin, what do I not owe you?

Cris.—(Pointing to Labranche.) Ask, just for fun, that fellow, if I play my part well.

Lab.—(To Valère.) Ah! Monsieur, you certainly have an adroit servant. He is the cleverest rascal in Paris—he compels my praise. Nor do I in truth back him up so badly either; if our enterprise succeeds you will owe no less obligation to me than to him.

Val.—You may both depend upon my gratitude; I promise you——

Cris.—Ah! Monsieur, no promises now; think, if you are seen with us all will be lost. Leave us quickly and, above all, do not show yourself here to-day.

Val.—I leave then, as you wish—good-bye, my friends; I rely on your judgment.

Lab.—Let your mind rest easy, Monsieur; retire quickly and abandon your fortune to us.

Val.—Remember that my fate——

Cris.—(Aside.) What a deluge of words!

Val.—Depends upon you.

Cris.—(Pushing him.) Go at once, I tell you. (Valère leaves.)

Lab.—He's gone at last.

Cris.—Once more I breathe freely.

Lab.—Well, we had a good scare. My heart was in my mouth for fear that M. Oronte might surprise us with your master.

Cris.—I feared that also—but as that is the only danger, we are now assured that our project will succeed. At present we can choose our route. Have you hired the horses for to-night?

Lab.—(Looking in the distance.) Yes.

Cris.—Good! In my opinion we had better take the Flanders road.

Lab.—(Still intently looking in the distance, abstractedly.)

The Flanders road?—Yes, that's well chosen; I'm for the Flanders road, too.

Cris.—But what are you looking at so attentively?

Lab.—I'm looking at—yes—no—heavens and earth! can it be—alas! it's his figure.

Cris.—Whose figure?

Lab.—Crispin, my poor Crispin, it is M. Orgon!

Cris.—The father of Damis?

Lab.—Himself.

Cris.—The cussed old man!

Lab.—I believe the whole infernal regions are leagued together to prevent our getting the dowry.

Cris.—He comes here—he will enter M. Oronte's house and all will be discovered.

Lab.—That is what I must prevent if possible. Go, await me at the inn—what I fear most is that M. Oronte may come out while I am talking. (Crispin leaves.)

Enter M. Orgon.

M. Orgon.—(He does not see Labranche.) I do not know what sort of a reception M. and Madam Oronte will accord me.

Lab.—(Aside.) You're not there yet. (Aloud.) Your servant, M. Orgon.

M. Org.—Ah! I didn't see you, Labranche.

Lab.—What! Monsieur, you surprise people this way? Who would have thought you were at Paris?

M. Org.—I left Chartres shortly after you, because on second thought I decided to speak to M. Oronte myself—that perhaps it was not courteous to withdraw my word through a valet.

Lab.—You have a very delicate sense of what is fitting, it seems to me. You intend then to call on M. and Madam Oronte yourself?

M. Org.—That is my intention.

Lab.—Then thank your good stars that you met me in time to prevent you.

M. Org.—Why, have you already seen them, Labranche?

Lab.—Oh yes, by gad! I've seen them. I come from there; Madam Oronte is terribly angry with you.

M. Org.—Angry with me?

Lab.—With you.—What! she said, M. Orgon breaks his word; who would have believed it? My daughter. then, must henceforth give up all hope of marriage.

M. Org.—But how will that prevent her marrying?

Lab.—That's what I asked; but can you expect an angry woman to listen to reason? That's as much as she can do when she's calm. She argues like a shopkeeper's wife—the world will not believe, she told me, that Damis has been obliged to marry a girl at Chartres. We shall soon hear that M. Orgon has thoroughly examined our means and finding them scanty has withdrawn his word.

M. Org.—For shame! can she imagine that people will say that?

Lab.—You would not believe to how great an extent fury has taken the place of reason.—Her eyes are sunken—she knows no one—she clutched me by the throat and I had a hard time to tear myself from her grasp.

M. Org.—And M. Oronte?

Lab.—Oh, as to M. Oronte, I found him much more moderate—he only slapped my face a couple of times.

M. Org.—You astonish me, Labranche. I little thought them given to such fits of passion. Ought they to blame me, because I consented to the marriage of my son? Did you not explain all the circumstances?

Lab.—Pardon me. I told them that your son, commencing where others ordinarily end; and that the family of your daughter-in-law were preparing to bring an action against you, when you wisely staved it off by uniting the parties.

M. Org.—And they weren't satisfied with this reason?

Lab.—Satisfied? You'll be satisfied if they get hold of you! Take my word for it, Monsieur, and return to Chartres immediately.

M. Org.—(About to enter M. Oronte's house.) No, La-

branche, I wish to see them and to represent the thing so clearly that——

Lab.—(Pulling him back.) You shall not enter, Monsieur; I assure you I cannot permit you to go where you are sure to be disfigured. If you have definitely decided to speak to them, wait until the heat of their passion has cooled.

M. Org.—That's sensible.

Lab.—Put off your visit until to-morrow; they will be better disposed to receive you.

M. Org.—You are right, they will be less violent. I shall follow your advice.

Lab.—However, Monsieur, do as you please; you, of course, are master.

M. Org.—No, no,—come, Labranche; I'll see them to-morrow.

Lab.—I'll follow in your footsteps. (M. Orgon leaves.) (Alone.) Or rather I'll go to Crispin.—At last we've surmounted all obstacles.—For me, however, there remains a little scruple regarding the dowry—it's hardly fair to share it with an associate, for, as my master cannot have Angélique, it seems to me that I should by right have the entire dowry—but how can I impose on Crispin?—I'll counsel him to spend the night with his bride—he loves her and is just the man to follow that sort of advice.—While he is trifling his time away, I'll decamp with the essential—but, no, I had better reject this plan and not open war upon a man as clever as myself—it might easily happen that some day he'd get his revenge. Besides, it would be contrary to our laws, for we rascals are more faithful to each other than are honest people.—But, here is M. Oronte, who is going to see his notary.—How fortunate to be rid of M. Orgon! (He leaves.)

Enter M. Oronte and Lisette.

Lisette.—Again I tell you, Monsieur, that Valère is an honest man and that you ought to thoroughly investigate——

M. Oronte.—I have already investigated, only too deeply, Lisette. I know that you are working in the interest of Valère, and I blush to think that both of you together were

not able to invent a more ingenious expedient to force me to defer the marriage.

Lis.—What! Monsieur, you imagine?

M. Oron.—No, Lisette, I imagine nothing; I'm easy to deceive; I am—the most stupid blockhead in the world.—Go, Lisette, go tell Valère that he shall never be my son-in-law—that's what he can assure his creditors. (He leaves.)

Lis.—(Alone.) Phew! what does all this mean? It's more than I can fathom.

Enter Valère.

Valère.—(He does not see Lisette.) Notwithstanding Crispin's warning, I cannot content myself to calmly await the success of his artifice. After all, I do not know why he recommended me so strongly not to show myself here, for indeed in place of injuring his scheme, I might aid it.

Lisette.—Ah! Monsieur, you have been gone a long time; where is Damis' letter?

Val.—Here it is—but, of course, it's of no use.—Rather, tell me, Lisette, how is the scheme getting on?

Lis.—Scheme? What scheme?

Val.—The one imagined by Crispin to help my suit.

Lis.—Crispin? Who's Crispin?

Val.—Confound it! he's my valet.

Lis.—I don't know him.

Val.—Now this is pushing dissimulation a little too far, Lisette. Crispin told me that you and he were working hand in hand.

Lis.—I don't know what you're talking about, Monsieur.

Val.—This is too much; I lose all patience with you.

Enter Madam Oronte and Angélique.

Madam Oronte.—I'm pleased to see you, Valère; I must reproach you. Ought an honorable man to forge letters?

Valère.—Forge? I, Madam? Who could have told you such an evil thing of me?

Lisette.—(To Madam Oronte.) Oh! Madam, M. Valère has

forged nothing; there has been some trickery.—But here is M. Oronte returning and M. Orgon with him. Now everything will be explained.

Enter M. Oronte and Orgon.

M. Oronte.—You may be sure there's rascality in it, M. Orgon.

M. Orgon.—That's just what we must clear up, M. Oronte.

M. Oron.—(To his wife.) I met M. Orgon while on my way to the notary; he has come, he tells me, to Paris to withdraw his word; Damis is really married.

Angélique.—(Aside.) What do I hear?

M. Org.—(To Madam Oronte.) It is true, Madam, and when you learn all the circumstances of this marriage you will excuse——

M. Oron.—(To his wife.) M. Orgon was not able to withhold his consent; but what I cannot comprehend is, that he assures me his son is at this very moment in Chartres.

M. Org.—Undoubtedly.

Madam Oronte.—There is a young man here, however, who claims to be your son.

M. Org.—He is an impostor.

M. Oron.—And Labranche, the same valet you brought with you a couple of weeks ago, calls him master.

M. Org.—Labranche, you say! Ah! the scoundrel. Now I am no longer surprised that a few moments ago he prevented me from entering your house. He told me that both of you were frightfully angry with me and that you had abused him.

Madam Oron.—The liar.

Lisette.—(Aside.) I see the trick, or am not far off, at least.

Valère.—(Aside.) That traitor! has he played me false?

M. Oron.—We'll get to the bottom of it now, for here they come.

Enter Crispin and Labranche.

Crispin.—(To M. Oronte.) Well, M. Oronte, is everything ready?—Our marriage— (Seeing Valère and M. Orgon.) Phew! what do I see?

Labranche.—(Low, to Crispin.) By gad! we are discovered. Let us save our skins.

Valère.—Oh! you'll not escape us so easily, you villains; and you shall get your deserts, too. (Valère grabs Crispin by the collar and MM. Oronte and Orgon seize Labranche.)

M. Oronte.—Ah! we have you fast, knaves.

M. Orgon.—(To Labranche.) Tell me, rascal, who is this other scoundrel that you passed off for Damis?

Val.—He is my valet.

Madam Oronte.—A valet? great heavens! a valet!

Val.—A traitor who makes me believe he is working in my interest, while in reality to deceive me he employs the vilest artifice.

Cris.—Gently, Monsieur, gently, do not judge by appearances.

M. Org.—(To Labranche.) And you, rogue, is this the way you fulfill the commands I intrust to you?

Labranche.—Go slowly, Monsieur, slowly; look well before you leap, if you please, and do not condemn people unheard.

M. Org.—What, would you dare to sustain that you are not a past-master in villainry?

Lab.—(Feigning to cry.) Now I'm a villain! very good! See what kindness one can receive for serving with affection!

Val.—(To Crispin.) Nor do you acknowledge more than he, I suppose, that you are a reprobate and a scamp?

Cris.—(Angrily.) Reprobate! scamp! The devil! Monsieur, but you are prodigal with epithets which do not fit me at all.

Val.—Besides, we do you the great wrong to suspect your fidelity, traitors!

M. Oron.—What have you to say to justify yourselves, wretches?

Lab.—Well, here's Crispin who'll at once rid you of your error.

Cris.—Labranche will explain the thing in two words.

Lab.—Speak, Crispin, and make our innocence clear.

Cris.—Speak yourself, Labranche, you shall soon disabuse their minds.

Lab.—No, no, you can unravel it better, I'm sure.

Cris.—(To M. Oronte and Valère.) Very well, Messieurs, I shall tell you the thing exactly as it happened. I took the name of Damis to disgust by my ridiculous airs M. and Madam Oronte and to favorably dispose them in this way to my master's marriage; but in place of shocking them by my impertinent manners, I have been so unfortunate as to please. It's not my fault; I couldn't help it.

M. Oron.—However, if we had let you alone, you would have carried your feint to the extent of marrying my daughter.

Cris.—No, Monsieur; ask Labranche; we came here expressly to confess the whole thing.

Val.—You cannot paint your perfidy in colors that will dazzle our eyes. Since Damis is married it was useless for Crispin to impersonate him.

Cris.—Very well, Messieurs; since you are not willing to acquit us as innocent persons, pray pardon us as guilty ones. We implore your forgiveness. (He drops on his knees before M. Oronte.)

Lab.—(Dropping on his knees also.) We petition your compassion.

Cris.—(To M. Oronte.) Frankly, the dowry tempted us. We are accustomed to fleecing people. Pardon us on the grounds of habit.

M. Oron.—No, no, your audacity shall not remain unpunished.

Lab.—Ah! Monsieur, be merciful; we implore it by the beaming eyes of Madam Oronte.

Cris.—By the tenderness you must feel for such a charming wife.

Madam Oron.—(To her husband.) These poor fellows move me to pity. I beg mercy for them.

Lisette.—(Aside.) What clever rascals they are!

M. Org.—You are very fortunate scamps, since Madam Oronte intercedes for you.

M. Oron.—I was strongly tempted to punish you, but as my wife desires it, we'll let bygones be bygones. Besides, I give to-day my daughter to Valère, and we must think only of rejoicing.—You are pardoned and, moreover, if you will promise to mend your ways I'll charge myself to better your condition.

Cris.—(Rising.) Oh! Monsieur, we sincerely promise.

Lab.—(Rising also.) Yes, Monsieur, we are so mortified not to have succeeded in our enterprise that we renounce rascality of every kind.

M. Oron.—You are clever, but you must make better use of your gifts; to make you both honest people I'll help you on.—I'll obtain for you, Labranche, a good commission.

Lab.—I guarantee, Monsieur, my willingness.

M. Oron.—(To Crispin.) And for the valet of my son-in-law I'll obtain in marriage the god-daughter of a farmer I know.

Cris.—I'll endeavor, Monsieur, by my complaisance to merit my god-father's kindness.

M. Oron.—We'll not remain here any longer, but go in. I trust that M. Orgon will honor with his presence my daughter's wedding.

M. Org.—Yes, for I wish to dance with Madam Oronte.

MAHOMET

BY VOLTAIRE.

(Translated by Oliver Leigh.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAHOMET.

ZOPIR, Sheik of Mecca.

OMAR, General and second in command to Mahomet.

SEID,
PALMIRA, } *Slaves to Mahomet.*

PHANOR, Senator of Mecca.

COMPANY OF MECCANS.

COMPANY OF MUSSULMANS.

SCENE—MECCA.

Mahomet.

PRELUDE.

Under guise of an attack on Mahomet and his faith, Voltaire, in his drama which bears that name, attacks every form of religion, though there is doubtless truth in what he says in his dedication to Frederick of Prussia, "The love of mankind and the hatred of fanaticism, two virtues which adorn your throne, guided my pen." After comparing his work with *Tartuffe* and claiming the right to expose in tragedy, as in comedy, "that species of imposture which sets to work the hypocrisy of some and the madness of others," he describes in detail the horrors of his theme. But these it will be better to leave for the author to unfold in his own lines. It is worthy of note that Pope Benedict XIV, to whom Voltaire addressed a later dedication of his work, replied by pronouncing it "an excellent tragedy, which I have read with much pleasure."

ACT I. SCENE I.

Zopir, Phanor.

Zopir.—Thinkest thou thy friend will ever bend the knee
To this proud hypocrite; shall I fall down

And worship, I who banished him from Mecca?
No: punish me, just heaven, as I deserve,
If e'er this hand, the friend of innocence
And freedom, stoop to cherish foul rebellion,
Or aid imposture to deceive mankind!

Phanor.—Thy zeal is noble, and becomes the chief
Of Ishmael's sacred senate, but may prove
Destructive to the cause it means to serve:
Thy ardor cannot check the rapid power
Of Mahomet, and but provokes his vengeance:
There was a time when you might safely draw
The sword of justice, to defend the rights
Of Mecca, and prevent the flames of war
From spreading o'er the land; then Mahomet
Was but a bold and factious citizen,
But now he is a conqueror, and a king;
Mecca's impostor at Medina shines
A holy prophet; nations bend before him,
And learn to worship crimes which we abhor.
Even here, a band of wild enthusiasts, drunk
With furious zeal, support his fond delusions,
His idle tales, and fancied miracles:
These spread sedition through the gaping throng,
Invite his forces, and believe a God
Inspires and renders him invincible.
The lovers of their country think with you,
But wisest counsels are not always followed;
False zeal, and fear, and love of novelty
Alarm the crowd; already half our city
Is left unpeopled; Mecca cries aloud
To thee, her father, and demands a peace.

Zop.—Peace with a traitor! coward nation, what
Can you expect but slavery from a tyrant!
Go, bend your supple knees, and prostrate fall
Before the idol whose oppressive hand
Shall crush you all: for me, I hate the traitor;
This heart's too deeply wounded to forgive:
The savage murderer robbed me of a wife
And two dear children: nor is his resentment

Less fierce than mine; I forced his camp, pursued
The coward to his tent, and slew his son:
The torch of hatred is lit up between us,
And time can never extinguish it.

Pha.— I hope
It never will; yet thou shouldst hide the flame,
And sacrifice thy griefs to public good:
What if he lay this noble city waste,
Will that avenge thee, will that serve thy cause?
Thou hast lost all, son, brother, daughter, wife.
Mecca alone remains to give thee comfort,
Do not lose that, do not destroy thy country.

Zop.—Kingdoms are lost by cowardice alone.

Pha.—As oft perhaps by obstinate resistance.

Zop.—Then let us perish, if it be our fate.

Pha.—When thou art almost in the harbor, thus
To brave the storm is false and fatal courage:
Kind heaven, thou seest, points out to thee the means
To soften this proud tyrant; fair Palmira,
Thy beauteous captive, brought up in the camp
Of this destructive conqueror, was sent
By gracious heaven, the messenger of peace,
Thy guardian angel, to appease the wrath
Of Mahomet; already by his herald
He has demanded her.

Zop.— And wouldst thou have me
Give up so fair a prize to this barbarian?
What! whilst the tyrant spreads destruction round him,
Unpeoples kingdoms, and destroys mankind,
Shall beauty's charms be sacrificed to bribe
A madman's frenzy? I should envy him
That lovely fair one more than all his glory;
Not that I feel the stings of wild desire,
Or, in the evening of my days, indulge,
Old as I am, a shameless passion for her;
But, whether objects born like her to please,
Spite of ourselves, demand our tenderest pity,
Or that perhaps a childless father hopes

To find in her another daughter, why
I know not, but for that unhappy maid
Still am I anxious; be it weakness in me,
Or reason's powerful voice, I cannot bear
To see her in the hands of Mahomet;
Would I could mould her to my wishes, form
Her willing mind, and make her hate the tyrant
As I do! She has sent to speak with me
Here in the sacred porch—and lo! she comes:
On her fair cheek the blush of modesty
And candor speaks the virtues of her heart.

SCENE II.

Zopir, Palmira.

Zopir.—Hail, lovely maid! the chance of cruel war
Hath made thee Zopir's captive, but thou art not
Amongst barbarians; all with me revere
Palmira's virtues, and lament her fate,
Whilst youth with innocence and beauty plead
Thy cause; whatever thou askest in Zopir's power,
Thou shalt not ask in vain: my life declines
Toward its period, and if my last hours
Can give Palmira joy, I shall esteem them
The best, the happiest I have ever known.

Palmira.—These two months past, my lord, your prisoner here,
Scarce have I felt the yoke of slavery;
Your generous hand, still raised to soothe affliction,
Hath wiped the tears of sorrow from my eyes,
And softened all the rigor of my fate:
Forgive me, if emboldened by your goodness
I ask for more, and centre every hope
Of future happiness on you alone;
Forgive me, if to Mahomet's request
I join Palmira's, and implore that freedom
He hath already asked: O listen to him,
And let me say, that after heaven and him
I am indebted most to generous Zopir.

Zop.—Has then oppression such enticing charms
That thou shouldst wish and beg to be the slave
Of Mahomet, to hear the clash of arms,
With him to live in deserts, and in caves,
And wander o'er his ever shifting country?

Pal.—Where'er the mind with ease and pleasure dwells,
There is our home, and there our native country:
He formed my soul; to Mahomet I owe
The kind instruction of my earlier years;
Taught by the happy partners of his bed,
Who still adoring and adored by him
Send up their prayers to heaven for his dear safety,
I lived in peace and joy! for ne'er did woe
Pollute that seat of bliss till the sad hour
Of my misfortune, when wide-wasting war
Rushed in upon us and enslaved Palmira:
Pity, my lord, a heart oppressed with grief,
That sighs for objects far, far distant from her.

Zop.—I understand you, madame; you expect
The tyrant's hand, and hope to share his throne.

Pal.—I honor him, my lord; my trembling soul
Looks up to Mahomet with holy fear
As to a god; but never did this heart
E'er cherish the vain hope that he would deign
To wed Palmira: No: such splendor ill
Would suit my humble state.

Zop.— Whoe'er thou art,
He was not born, I trust, to be thy husband,
No, nor thy master; much I err, or thou
Springest from a race designed by heaven to check
This haughty Arab, and give laws to him
Who thus assumes the majesty of kings.

Pal.—Alas! we know not what it is to boast
Of birth or fortune; from our infant years
Without or parents, friends, or country, doomed
To slavery; here resigned to our hard fate,
Strangers to all but to that God we serve,
We live content in humble poverty.

Zop.—And can ye be content? and are ye strangers,

Without a father, and without a home?
I am a childless, poor, forlorn, old man;
You might have been the comfort of my age:
To form a plan of future happiness
For you, had softened my own wretchedness,
And made me some amends for all my wrongs:
But you abhor my country and my law.

Pal.—I am not mistress of myself, and how
Can I be thine? I pity thy misfortunes,
And bless thee for thy goodness to Palmira;
But Mahomet has been a father to me.

Zop.—A father! ye just gods! the vile impostor!

Pal.—Can he deserve that name, the holy prophet,
The great ambassador of heaven, sent down
To interpret its high will?

Zop.— Deluded mortals!
How blind ye are, to follow this proud madman,
This happy robber, whom my justice spared,
And raise him from the scaffold to a throne!

Pal.—My lord, I shudder at your imprecations;
Though I am bound by honor and the ties
Of gratitude to love thee for thy bounties,
This blasphemy against my kind protector
Cancels the bond, and fills my soul with horror.
O superstition, how thy savage power
Deprives at once the best and tenderest hearts
Of their humanity!

Zop.— Alas! Palmira,
Spite of myself, I feel for thy misfortunes,
Pity thy weakness, and lament thy fate.

Pal.—You will not grant me then——

Zop.— I cannot yield thee
To him who has deceived thy easy heart,
To a base tyrant; No: thou art a treasure
Too precious to be parted with, and makest
This hypocrite but more detested.

SCENE III.

Zopir, Palmira, Phanor.

Zopir.— Phanor,
What wouldst thou?

Phanor.— At the city gate that leads
To Moad's fertile plain, the valiant Omar
Is just arrived.

Zop.— Indeed; the tyrant's friend,
The fierce, vindictive Omar, his new convert,
Who had so long opposed him, and still fought
For us!

Pha.— Perhaps he yet may serve his country,
Already he hath offered terms of peace;
Our chiefs have parleyed with him, he demands
An hostage, and I hear they've granted him
The noble Seid.

Palmira.— Seid? gracious heaven!

Pha.—Behold! my lord, he comes.

Zop.— Ha! Omar here!
There's no retreating now, he must be heard;
Palmira, you may leave us.—O ye gods
Of my forefathers, you who have protected
The sons of Ishmael these three thousand years,
And thou, O Sun, with all those sacred lights
That glitter round us, witness to my truth,
Aid and support me in the glorious conflict
With proud iniquity!

SCENE IV.

Zopir, Omar, Phanor, Attendants.

Zopir.— At length, it seems,
Omar returns, after a three years' absence,
To visit that loved country which his hand
So long defended, and his honest heart
Has now betrayed: deserter of our gods,

Deserter of our laws, how darest thou thus
Approach these sacred walls to persecute
And to oppress; a public robber's slave;
What is thy errand? wherefore comest thou hither?

Omar.—To pardon thee: by me our holy prophet,
In pity to thy age, thy well-known valor,
And past misfortunes, offers thee his hand:
Omar is come to bring thee terms of peace.

Zop.—And shall a factious rebel offer peace
Who should have sued for pardon? gracious gods!
Will ye permit him to usurp your power,
And suffer Mahomet to rule mankind?
Dost thou not blush, vile minion as thou art,
To serve a traitor? hast thou not beheld him
Friendless and poor, an humble citizen,
And ranking with the meanest of the throng?
How little then in fortune or in fame!

Omar.—Thus low and grovelling souls like thine pretend
To judge of merit, whilst in fortune's scale
Ye weigh the worth of men: proud, empty being,
Dost thou not know that the poor worm which crawls
Low on the earth, and the imperial eagle
That soars to heaven, in the all-seeing eye
Of their eternal Maker are the same,
And shrink to nothing? men are equal all;
From virtue only true distinction springs,
And not from birth: there are exalted spirits
Who claim respect and honor from themselves
And not their ancestors: these, these, my lord,
Are heaven's peculiar care, and such is he
Whom I obey, and who alone deserves
To be a master; all mankind like me
Shall one day fall before the conqueror's feet,
And future ages follow my example.

Zop.—Omar, I know thee well; thy artful hand
In vain hath drawn the visionary portrait;
Thou mayest deceive the multitude, but know,
What Mecca worships Zopir can despise:
Be honest then, and with the impartial eye

Of reason look on Mahomet; behold him
But as a mortal, and consider well
By what base arts the vile impostor rose,
A camel-driver, a poor abject slave,
Who first deceived a fond, believing woman,
And now supported by an idle dream
Draws in the weak and credulous multitude:
Condemned to exile, I chastised the rebel
Too lightly, and his insolence returns
With double force to punish my indulgence.
He fled with Fatima from cave to cave,
And suffered chains, contempt and banishment;
Meantime the fury which he called divine
Spread like a subtle poison through the crowd;
Medina was infected: Omar then,
To reason's voice attentive, would have stopped
The impetuous torrent; he had courage then
And virtue to attack the proud usurper,
Though now he crouches to him like a slave.
If thy proud master be indeed a prophet,
How didst thou dare to punish him? or why,
If an impostor, wilt thou dare to serve him?

Omar.—I punished him because I knew him not;
But now, the veil of ignorance removed,
I see him as he is; behold him born
To change the astonished world, and rule mankind;
When I beheld him rise in awful pomp,
Intrepid, eloquent, by all admired,
By all adored; beheld him speak and act,
Punish and pardon like a god, I lent
My little aid, and joined the conqueror.
Altars, thou knowest, and thrones were our reward;
Once I was blind, like thee, but, thanks to heaven!
My eyes are opened now; would, Zopir, thine
Were open, too! let me entreat thee, change,
As I have done; no longer boast thy zeal
And cruel hatred, nor blaspheme our God,
But fall submissive at the hero's feet
Whom thou hast injured; kiss the hand that bears
The angry lightning, lest it fall upon thee.

Omar is now the second of mankind;
A place of honor yet remains for thee,
If prudent thou wilt yield, and own a master:
What we have been thou knowest, and what we are:
The multitude are ever weak and blind,
Made for our use, born but to serve the great,
But to admire, believe us, and obey:
Reign then with us, partake the feast of grandeur,
No longer deign to imitate the crowd,
But henceforth make them tremble.

Zop.— Tremble thou,
And Mahomet, with all thy hateful train:
Thinkest thou that Mecca's faithful chief will fall
At an impostor's feet, and crown a rebel?
I am no stranger to his specious worth;
His courage and his conduct have my praise;
Were he but virtuous I like thee should love him;
But as he is I hate the tyrant: hence,
Nor talk to me of his deceitful mercy,
His clemency and goodness; all his aim
Is cruelty and vengeance: with this hand
I slew his darling son; I banished him:
My hatred is inflexible, and so
Is Mahomet's resentment: if he e'er
Reënters Mecca, he must cut his way
Through Zopir's blood, for he is deeply stained
With crimes that justice never can forgive.

Omar.—To show thee Mahomet is merciful,
That he can pardon though thou canst not, here
I offer thee the third of all our spoils
Which we have taken from tributary kings;
Name your conditions, and the terms of peace;
Set your own terms on fair Palmira; take
Our treasures, and be happy.

Zop.— Thinkest thou Zopir
Will basely sell his honor and his country,
Will blast his name with infamy for wealth,
The foul reward of guilt, or that Palmira
Will ever own a tyrant for her master?

She is too virtuous e'er to be the slave
Of Mahomet, nor will I suffer her
To fall a sacrifice to base impostors
Who would subvert the laws, and undermine
The safety and the virtue of mankind.

Omar.—Implacably severe; thou talkest to Omar
As if he were a criminal, and thou
His judge; but henceforth I would have thee act
A better part, and treat me as a friend,
As the ambassador of Mahomet,
A conqueror and a king.

Zop.— A king! who made,
Who crowned him?

Omar.— Victory: respect his glory,
And tremble at his power: amidst his conquests
The hero offers peace; our swords are still
Unsheathed, and woe to this rebellious city
If she submits not: think what blood must flow,
The blood of half our fellow-citizens;
Consider, Zopir, Mahomet is here,
And even now requests to speak with thee.

Zop.—Ha! Mahomet!

Omar.— Yes, he conjures thee.

Zop.— Traitor!
Were I the sole despotic ruler here
He should be answered soon—by chastisement.

Omar.—I pity, Zopir, thy pretended virtue;
But since the senate insolently claim
Divided empire with thee, to the senate
Let us begone; Omar will meet thee there.

Zop.—I'll follow thee: we then shall see who best
Can plead his cause: I will defend my gods,
My country, and her laws; thy impious voice
Shall bellow for thy vengeful deity,
Thy persecuting god, and his false prophet.
(Turning to Phanor.)
Haste, Phanor, and with me repulse the traitor;
Who spares a villain is a villain:—come,

Let us, my friend, unite to crush his pride,
Subvert his wily purposes, destroy him,
Or perish in the attempt: If Mecca listens
To Zopir's councils, I shall free my country
From a proud tyrant's power, and save mankind.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Seid, Palmira.

Palmira.—Welcome, my Seid, do I see thee here
Once more in safety? what propitious god
Conducted thee? at length Palmira's woes
Shall have an end, and we may yet be happy.

Seid.—Thou sweetest charmer, balm of every woe,
Dear object of my wishes and my tears,
O since that day of blood when flushed with conquest
The fierce barbarian snatched thee from my arms,
When midst a heap of slaughtered friends I lay
Expiring on the ground, and called on death,
But called in vain, to end my hated being,
What have I suffered for my dear Palmira!
How have I cursed the tardy hours that long
Withheld my vengeance! my distracted soul's
Impatience thirsted for the bloody field,
That with these hands I might lay waste this seat
Of slavery, where Palmira mourned so long
In sad captivity; but thanks to heaven!
Our holy prophet, whose deep purposes
Are far beyond the ken of human wisdom,
Hath hither sent his chosen servant Omar;
I flew to meet him, they required a hostage;
I gave my faith, and they received it; firm
In my resolve to live or die for thee.

Pal.—Seid, the very moment ere thou camest
To calm my fears, and save me from despair,
Was I entreating the proud ravisher;
Thou knowest, I cried, the only good on earth
I prized is left behind, restore it to me:

Then clasped his knees, fell at the tyrant's feet,
And bathed them with my tears, but all in vain:
How his unkind refusal shocked my soul!
My eyes grew dim, and motionless I stood
As one deprived of life; no succor nigh,
No ray of hope was left, when Seid came
To ease my troubled heart, and bring me comfort.

Seid.—Who could behold unmoved Palmira's woes?

Pal.—The cruel Zopir; not insensible
He seemed to my misfortunes, yet at last
Unkindly told me, I must never hope
To leave these walls, for naught should tear me from him.

Seid.—'Tis false; for Mahomet, my royal master,
With the victorious Omar, and forgive me,
If to these noble friends I proudly add
The name of Seid, these shall set thee free,
Dry up thy tears, and make Palmira happy:
The God of Mahomet, our great protector,
That God whose sacred standard I have borne;
He who destroyed Medina's haughty ramparts
Shall lay rebellious Mecca at our feet;
Omar is here, and the glad people look
With eyes of friendship on him; in the name
Of Mahomet he comes, and meditates
Some noble purpose.

Pal.— Mahomet indeed
Might free us, and unite two hearts long since
Devoted to his cause; but he, alas!
Is far removed, and we abandoned captives.

SCENE II.

Palmira, Seid, Omar.

Omar.—Despair not; heaven perhaps may yet reward you,
For Mahomet and liberty are nigh.

Seid.—Is he then come?

Palmira.—Our friend and father?

Omar.— Yes.

I met the council, and by Mahomet
Inspired, addressed them thus: "Within these walls,
Even here," I cried, "the favorite of heaven,
Our holy prophet, first drew breath; the great,
The mighty conqueror, the support of kings;
And will ye not permit him but to rank
As friend and fellow-citizen? he comes not
To ruin or enslave, but to protect,
To teach you and to save, to fix his power,
And hold dominion o'er the conquered heart."
I spoke; the hoary sages smiled applause,
And all inclined to favor us; but Zopir,
Still resolute and still inflexible,
Declared, the people should be called together,
And give their general voice: the people met,
Again I spoke, addressed the citizens,
Exhorted, threatened, practiced every art
To win their favor, and at length prevailed;
The gates are opened to great Mahomet,
Who after fifteen years of cruel exile
Returns to bless once more his native land;
With him the gallant Ali, brave Hercides,
And Ammon the invincible, besides
A numerous train of chosen followers:
The people throng around him; some with looks
Of hatred, some with smiles of cordial love;
Some bless the hero, and some curse the tyrant:
Some threaten and blaspheme, whilst others fall
Beneath his feet, embrace and worship him;
Meantime the names of God, of peace, and freedom,
Are echoed through the all-believing crowd;
Whilst Zopir's dying party bellows forth
In idle threats its impotent revenge:
Amidst their cries, unruffled and serene,
In triumph walks the god-like Mahomet,
Bearing the olive in his hand; already
Peace is proclaimed, and see! the conqueror comes.

SCENE III.

Mahomet, Omar, Hercides, Seid, Palmira, Attendants.

Mahomet.—My friends, and fellow-laborers, valiant Ali,
Morad, and Ammon, and Hercides, hence
To your great work, and in my name instruct
The people, lead them to the paths of truth,
Promise and threaten; let my God alone
Be worshipped, and let those who will not love
Be taught to fear him.—Seid, art thou here?
Seid.—My ever-honored father, and my king,
Led by that power divine who guided thee
To Mecca's walls, preventing your commands
I came, prepared to live or die with thee.
Ma.—You should have waited for my orders; he
Who goes beyond his duty knows it not;
I am heaven's minister, and thou art mine;
Learn then of me to serve and to obey.
Palmira.—Forgive, my lord, a youth's impatient ardor:
Brought up together from our infant years,
The same our fortunes, and our thoughts the same:
Alas! my life has been a life of sorrow;
Long have I languished in captivity,
Far from my friends, from Seid, and from thee;
And now at last, when I beheld a ray
Of comfort shining on me, thy unkindness
Blasts my fair hopes, and darkens all the scene.
Ma.—Palmira, 'tis enough: I know thy virtues;
Let naught disturb thee: spite of all my cares,
Glory, and empire, and the weight of war,
I will remember thee; Palmira still
Lives in my heart, and shares it with mankind:
Seid shall join our troops; thou, gentle maid,
Mayest serve thy God in peace: fear naught but Zopir.

SCENE IV.

Mahomet, Omar.

Mahomet.—Brave Omar, stay, for in thy faithful bosom

Will I repose the secrets of my soul:
The lingering progress of a doubtful siege
May stop our rapid course; we must not give
These weak deluded mortals too much time
To pry into our actions; prejudice
Rules o'er the vulgar with despotic sway.
Thou knowest there is a tale which I have spread
And they believe, that universal empire
Awaits the prophet, who to Mecca's walls
Shall lead his conquering bands, and bring her peace.
'Tis mine to mark the errors of mankind,
And to avail me of them; but whilst thus
I try each art to soothe this fickle people,
What thinks my friend of Seid and Palmira?

Omar.—I think most nobly of them, that amidst
Those few staunch followers who own no God,
No faith but thine, who love thee as their father,
Their friend, and benefactor, none obey
Or serve thee with an humbler, better mind;
They are most faithful.

Ma.— Omar, thou art deceived;
They are my worst of foes, they love each other.

Omar.—And can you blame their tenderness?

Ma.— My friend,
I'll tell thee all my weakness.

Omar.— How, my lord!

Ma.—Thou knowest the reigning passion of my soul;
Whilst proud ambition and the cares of empire
Weighed heavy on me, Mahomet's hard life
Has been a conflict with opposing Nature,
Whom I have vanquished by austerity,
And self-denial; have banished from me
That baleful poison which unnerves mankind,
Which only serves to fire them into madness,
And brutal follies; on the burning sand
Or desert rocks I brave the inclement sky,
And bear the seasons' rough vicissitude:
Love is my only solace, the dear object
Of all my toils, the idol I adore,

The god of Mahomet, the powerful rival
Of my ambition: know, midst all my queens,
Palmira reigns sole mistress of my heart:
Think then what pangs of jealousy thy friend
Must feel when she expressed her fatal passion
For Seid.

Omar.—But thou art revenged.

Ma.— Judge thou
If soon I ought not to take vengeance on them;
That thou mayest hate my rival more, I'll tell thee
Who Seid and Palmira are—the children
Of him whom I abhor, my deadliest foe.

Omar.—Ha! Zopir!

Ma.— Is their father: fifteen years
Are past since brave Hercides to my care
Gave up their infant years; they know not yet
Or who or what they are; I brought them up
Together; I indulged their lawless passion,
And added fuel to the guilty flame.
Methinks it is as if the hand of heaven
Had meant in them to centre every crime.
But I must—Ha! their father comes this way,
His eyes are full of bitterness and wrath
Against me—now be vigilant, my Omar,
Hercides must be careful to possess
This most important pass; return, and tell me
Whether 'tis most expedient to declare
Against him, or retreat: away.

SCENE V.

Zopir, Mahomet.

Zopir.— Hard fate!
Unhappy Zopir! thus compelled to meet
My worst of foes, the foe of all mankind!

Mahomet.—Since 'tis the will of heaven that Mahomet
And Zopir should at length unite, approach
Without a blush, and fearless tell thy tale.

Zop.—I blush for thee alone, whose baneful arts
Have drawn thy country to the brink of ruin;
Who in the bosom of fair peace wouldst wage
Intestine war, loosen the sacred bonds
Of friendship, and destroy our happiness;
Beneath the veil of proffered terms thou meanest
But to betray, whilst discord stalks before thee:
Thou vile assemblage of hypocrisy
And insolence, abhorred tyrant! thus
Do the chosen ministers of heaven dispense
Its sacred blessings, and announce their God?

Ma.—Wert thou not Zopir, I would answer thee
As thou deservest, in thunder, by the voice
Of that offended Being thou deridest:
Armed with the hallowed Koran I would teach thee
To tremble and obey in humble silence:
And with the subject world to kneel before me;
But I will talk to thee without disguise,
As man to man should speak, and friend to friend:
I have ambition, Zopir; where's the man
Who has it not? but never citizen,
Or chief, or priest, or king projected aught
So noble as the plan of Mahomet;
In acts or arms hath every nation shone
Superior in its turn; Arabia now
Steps forth; that generous people, long unknown
And unrespected, saw her glories sunk,
Her honors lost; but, lo! the hour is come
When she shall rise to victory and renown;
The world lies desolate from pole to pole;
India's slaves, and bleeding Persia mourns
Her slaughtered sons; whilst Egypt hangs the head
Dejected; from the walls of Constantine
Splendor is fled; the Roman Empire torn
By discord, sees its scattered members spread
On every side inglorious;—let us raise
Arabia on the ruins of mankind:
The blind and tottering universe demands
Another worship, and another God.
Crete had her Minos, Egypt her Osiris,

To Asia Zoroaster gave his laws,
And Numa was in Italy adored:
O'er savage nations where nor monarchs ruled
Nor manners softened, nor religion taught,
Hath many a sage his fruitless maxims spread;
Beneath a nobler yoke I mean to bend
The prostrate world, and change their feeble laws,
Abolish their false worship, pull down
Their powerless gods, and on my purer faith
Found universal empire; say not, Zopir,
That Mahomet betrays his country, no:
I mean but to destroy its weak supports,
And, banishing idolatry, unite it
Beneath one king, one prophet, and one God;
I shall subdue it but to make it glorious.

Zop.—Is this thy purpose then, and darest thou thus
Avow it? canst thou change the hearts of men,
And make them think like thee? are war and slaughter
The harbingers of wisdom and of peace;
Can he who ravages instruct mankind?
If in the night of ignorance and error
We long have wandered, must thy dreadful torch
Enlighten us? What right hast thou to empire?

Ma.—That right which firm, exalted spirits claim
O'er vulgar minds.

Zop.— Thus every bold impostor
May forge new fetters, and enslave mankind:
He has a right, it seems, to cheat the world
If he can do it with an air of grandeur.

Ma.—I know your people well; I know they want
A leader; my religion, true or false,
Is needful to them: what have all your gods
And all your idols done? what laurels grow
Beneath their altars? your low, grovelling sect
Debases man, unnerves his active soul,
And makes it heavy, phlegmatic, and mean;
Whilst mine exalts it, gives it strength and courage:
My law forms heroes.

Zop.— Rather call them robbers:

Away; nor bring thy hateful lessons here;
Go to the school of tyrants, boast thy frauds
To lost Medina, where thou reignest supreme,
Where blinded bigots bend beneath thy power,
And thou beholdest thy equals at thy feet.

Ma.—My equals! Mahomet has none; long since
I passed them all; Medina is my own,
And Mecca trembles at me; if thou holdest
Thy safety dear, receive the peace I offer.

Zop.—Thou talkest of peace, but 'tis not in thy heart;
I'm not to be deceived.

Ma.— I would not have thee;
The weak deceive, the powerful command:
To-morrow I shall force thee to submit;
To-day, observe, I would have been thy friend.

Zop.—Can we be friends? can Mahomet and Zopir
E'er be united? say, what god shall work
A miracle like that?

Ma.— I'll tell thee one,
A powerful God, one that is always heard,
By me he speaks to thee.

Zop.— Who is it? name him.

Ma.—Interest, thy own dear interest.

Zop.— Sooner heaven
And hell shall be united; interest
May be the god of Mahomet, but mine
Is—justice: what shall join them to each other?
Where is the cement that must bind our friendship?
Is it that son I slew, or the warm blood
Of Zopir's house which thou hast shed?

Ma.— It is
Thy blood, thy son's——for now I will unveil
A secret to thee, known to none but me:
Thou weepest thy children dead; they both are—living.

Zop.—What sayest thou? living? unexpected bliss!
My children living?

Ma.— Yes; and both—my prisoners.

Zop.—My children slaves to thee? impossible!

Ma.—My bounty nourished them.

Zop.— And couldst thou spare
A child of Zopir's?

Ma.— For their father's faults
I would not punish them.

Zop.— But tell me, say,
For what are they reserved?

Ma.— Their life or death
Depend on me: speak but the word, and thou
Art master of their fate.

Zop.— O name the price
And thou shalt have it; must I give my blood,
Or must I bear their chains, and be the slave
Of Mahomet?

Ma.— I ask not either of thee:
Lend me thy aid but to subdue the world;
Surrender Mecca to me, and give up
Your temple, bid the astonished people read
My sacred Koran; be thou my vassal,
And fall before me, then will I restore
Thy son, perhaps hereafter may reward thee
With honors, and contract a closer tie
With Zopir.

Zop.— Mahomet, thou seest in me
A tender father: after fifteen years
Of cruel absence, to behold my children,
To die in their embraces, were the first
And fairest blessings that my soul could wish for;
But if to thee I must betray my country,
Or sacrifice my children, know, proud tyrant,
The choice is made already—fare thee well.

Ma.—Inexorable dotard! but henceforth
I will be more implacable, more cruel
Even than thyself.

SCENE VI.

Mahomet, Omar.

Omar.— And so indeed thou must be

Or all is lost: already I have bought
Their secret counsels: Mahomet, to-morrow
The truce expires, and Zopir reassumes
His power; thy life's in danger: half the senate
Are leagued against thee: those who dare not fight
May hire the dark assassin to destroy thee;
May screen their guilt beneath the mask of justice,
And call the murder legal punishment.

Mahomet.—First they shall feel my vengeance: persecution,
Thou knowest, has ever been my best support.
Zopir must die.

Omar.— 'Tis well resolved: his fate
Will teach the rest obedience: lose no time.

Ma.—Yet, spite of my resentment, I must hide
The murderous hand that deals the blow, to 'scape
Suspicion's watchful eye, and not incense
The multitude.

Omar.— They are not worth our care.

Ma.—And yet they must be pleased: I want an arm
That will strike boldly.

Omar.— Seid is the man;
I'll answer for him.

Ma.— Seid?

Omar.— Ay: the best,
The fittest instrument to serve our purpose:
As Zopir's hostage he may find occasion
To speak with him, and soon avenge his master.
Thy other favorites are too wise, too prudent
For such a dangerous enterprise; old age
Takes off the bandage of credulity
From mortal eyes; but the young, simple heart,
The willing slave to its own fond opinions,
And void of guile, will act as we direct it:
Youth is the proper period for delusion.
Seid, thou knowest, is superstitious, bold,
And violent, but easy to be led;
Like a tame lion, to his keeper's voice
Obedient.

Ma.—What! the brother of Palmira?

Omar.—Ay: Seid, the fierce son of thy proud foe,
The incestuous rival of great Mahomet,
His master's rival.

Ma.— I detest him, Omar,
Abhor his very name; my murdered son
Cries out for vengeance on him; but thou knowest
The object of my love, and whence she sprung;
Thou seest I am oppressed on every side;
I would have altars, victims, and a throne;
I would have Zopir's blood, and Seid's too:
I must consult my interest, my revenge,
My honor, and my love, that fatal passion,
Which, spite of my resentment, holds this heart
In shameful chains: I must consult religion,
All powerful motive, and necessity
That throws a veil o'er every crime: away.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Seid, Palmira.

Palmira.—O Seid, keep me not in dread suspense,
What is this secret sacrifice? what blood
Hath heaven demanded?

Seid.— The eternal power
Deigns to accept my service, calls on me
To execute its purposes divine;
To him this heart's devoted, and for him
This arm shall rise in vengeance; I am bound
To Omar and to Mahomet, have sworn
To perish in the glorious cause of heaven:
My next and dearest care shall be Palmira.

Pal.—Why was not I a witness to thy oath?
Had I been with thee, I had been less wretched;
But doubts distract me: Omar talks of treason,
Of blood that soon must flow; the senate's rage,
And Zopir's dark intrigues: the flames of war
Once more are kindled, and the sword is drawn

Heaven only knows when to be sheathed again:
So says our prophet, he who cannot lie,
Cannot deceive us: O I fear for Seid,
Fear all from Zopir.

Seid.— Can he have a heart
So base and so perfidious? but this morning,
When as a hostage I appeared before him,
I thought him noble, generous and humane;
Some power invincible in secret worked,
And won me to him; whether the respect
Due to his name, or specious form external
Concealed the blackness of his heart I know not;
Whether thy presence filled my raptured soul
With joy that drove out every painful sense,
And would not let me think of aught but thee:
Whate'er the cause, methought I was most happy
When nearest him: that he should thus seduce
My easy heart makes me detest him more;
And yet how hard it is to look on those
With eyes of hatred whom we wish to love!

Pal.—By every bond hath heaven united us,
And Seid and Palmira are the same:
Were I not bound to thee, and to that faith
Which Mahomet inspires, I too had pleaded
The cause of Zopir; but religion, love,
And nature, all forbid it.

Seid.— Think no more
Of vain remorse, but listen to the voice
Of heaven, the God we serve will be propitious:
Our holy prophet who protects his children
Will bless our faithful love: for thy dear sake
I hazard all. Farewell.

SCENE II.

Palmira.

Palmira.—(Alone.) Some dark presage
Of future misery hangs o'er me still:
That love which made my happiness, this day,

So often wished for, is a day of horror:
What is this dreadful oath, this solemn compact
Which Seid talks of? I've a thousand fears
Upon me when I think of Zopir: oft
As I invoke great Mahomet, I feel
A secret dread, and tremble as I worship:
O save me, heaven! fearful I obey,
And blind I follow: O direct my steps
Aright, and deign to wash my tears away!

SCENE III.

Mahomet, Palmira.

Palmira.—Propitious heaven hath heard my prayers; he comes,
The prophet comes. O gracious Mahomet,
My Seid——

Mahomet.— What of him? thou seemest disturbed;
What should Palmira fear when I am with her!

Pal.—Have I not cause when Mahomet himself
Seems touched with grief?

Ma.— Perhaps it is for thee:
Darest thou, imprudent maid, avow a passion
Ere I approved it: is the heart I formed
Turned rebel to its master, to my laws
Unfaithful? O ingratitude!

Pal.— My lord,
Behold me at your feet, and pity me:
Didst thou not once propitious smile upon us,
And give thy sanction to our growing love?
Thou knowest the virtuous passion that unites us
Is but a chain that binds us more to thee.

Ma.—The bonds that folly and imprudence knit
Are dangerous; guilt doth sometimes follow close
The steps of innocence: our hearts deceive us,
And love with all his store of dear delights,
May cost us tears, and dip his shafts in blood.

Pal.—Nor would I murmur if it flowed for Seid.

Ma.—Are you indeed so fond?

Pal.— E'er since the day
When good Hercides to thy sacred power
Consigned us both, unconquerable instinct,
Still growing with our years, united us
In tender friendship; 'twas the work of heaven
That guides our every action, and o'errules
The fate of mortals; so thy doctrines teach:
God cannot change, nor gracious heaven condemn
That love itself inspired: what once was right
Is always so; canst thou then blame Palmira?

Ma.—I can, and must; nay, thou wilt tremble more
When I reveal the horrid secret to thee.
Attend, rash maid, and let me teach thy soul
What to avoid, and what to follow: listen
To me alone.

Pal.— To thee alone Palmira
Will listen ever, the obedient slave
Of Mahomet; this heart can never lose
Its veneration for thy sacred name.

Ma.—That veneration in excess may lead
To foul ingratitude.

Pal.— When I forget
Thy goodness, then may Seid punish me!

Ma.—Seid!

Pal.— O why, my lord, that cruel frown,
And look severe?

Ma.— Be not alarmed; I meant
But to explore the secrets of thy heart,
And try if thou wert worthy to be saved:
Be confident, and rest on my protection;
On your obedience will depend your fate:
If ye expect a blessing at my hands,
Be careful to deserve it, and whate'er
The will of heaven determines touching Seid,
Be thou his guide, and direct him in the paths
Of duty, and religion; let him keep
His promise, and be worthy of Palmira.

Pal.—O he will keep it, doubt him not, my lord,
I'll answer for his heart as for my own;
Seid adores thee, worships Mahomet
More than he loves Palmira; thou art all
To him, his friend, his father, and his king:
I'll fly, and urge him to his duty.

SCENE IV.

Mahomet.

Ma.—(Alone.) Well:
Spite of myself I must, it seems, be made
A confidant; the simple girl betrayed
Her guilty flame, and innocently plunged
The dagger in my heart: unhappy race!
Father and children, all my foes, all doomed
To make me wretched! but ye soon shall prove
That dreadful is my hatred—and my love.

SCENE V.

Mahomet, Omar.

Omar.—At length the hour is come, to seize Palmira,
To conquer Mecca, and to punish Zopir;
His death alone can prop our feeble cause,
And humble these proud citizens: brave Seid
Can best avenge thee; he has free access
To Zopir: yonder gloomy passage leads
To his abode; there the rebellious chief
His idle vows and flattering incense pours
Before his fancied deities; there Seid,
Full of the law divine by thee inspired,
Shall sacrifice the traitor to the God
Of Mahomet.

Mahomet.— He shall: that youth was born
For crimes of deepest dye: he shall be first
My useful slave, my instrument, and then
The victim of my rage; it must be so:

My safety, my resentment, and my love,
My holy faith, and the decrees of fate
Irrevocable, all require it of me:
But thinkest thou, Omar, he hath all the warmth
Of wild fanaticism?

Omar.— I know he has,
And suits our purpose well; Palmira, too,
Will urge him on; religion, love, resentment
Will blind his headstrong youth, and hurry him
To madness.

Ma.— Hast thou bound him by an oath?

Omar.—O yes; in all the gloomy pomp of rites
Nocturnal, oaths, and altars, we have fixed
His superstitious soul, placed in his hand
The sacred sword, and fired him with the rage
Of fierce enthusiasm—but behold him.

SCENE VI.

Mahomet, Omar, Seid.

Mahomet.— Child
Of heaven, decreed to execute the laws
Of an offended God, now hear by me
His sacred will: thou must avenge his cause.

Seid.—O thou, to whom my soul devoted bends
In humblest adoration, king and prophet,
Sovereign, acknowledged by the voice of heaven,
O'er prostrate nations—I am wholly thine:
But O enlighten my dark mind! O say,
How can weak man avenge his God?

Ma.— Oft-times
Doth he make use of feeble hands like thine
To punish impious mortals, and assert
His power divine.

Seid.— Will he, whose perfect image
Is seen in Mahomet, thus condescend
To honor Seid?

Ma.— Do as he ordains;

This is the highest honor man can boast,
Blindly to execute his great decree:
Be thankful for the choice, and strike the blow:
The angel of destruction shall assist,
The God of armies shall protect thee.

Seid.— Speak;
What tyrant must be slain? what blood must flow?

Ma.—The murderer's blood whom Mahomet abhors,
Who persecutes our faith, and spurns our God,
Who slew my son; the worst of all my foes,
The cruel Zopir.

Seid.— Ha! must Zopir fall?

Ma.—And dost thou pause? presumptuous youth! 'tis impious
But to deliberate: far from Mahomet
Be all who for themselves shall dare to judge
Audacious; those who reason are not oft
Prone to believe; thy part is to obey.
Have I not told thee what the will of heaven
Determines? if it be decreed that Mecca,
Spite of her crimes and base idolatry,
Shall be the promised temple, the chosen seat
Of empire, where I am appointed king,
And pontiff, knowest thou why our Mecca boasts
These honors? knowest thou holy Abram here
Was born, that here his sacred ashes rest?
He who, obedient to the voice of God,
Stifled the cries of nature, and gave up
His darling child: the same all-powerful Being
Requires of thee a sacrifice; to thee
He calls for blood; and darest thou hesitate
When God commands? hence, vile idolater,
Unworthy Mussulman, away, and seek
Another master; go, and love Palmira;
But thou despisest her, and bravest the wrath
Of angry heaven; away, forsake thy lord,
And serve his deadliest foes.

Seid.— It is the voice
Of God that speaks in Mahomet:—command,
And I obey.

Ma.— Strike, then, and by the blood
Of Zopir merit life eternal.—Omar,
Attend and watch him well.

SCENE VII.

Seid.

Seid.—(Alone.) To sacrifice
A poor, defenseless, weak old man!—no matter:
How many victims at the altar fall
As helpless! yet their blood in grateful streams
Rises to heaven: God hath appointed me;
Seid hath sworn, and Seid shall perform
His sacred promise:—O assist me now,
Illustrious spirits, you who have destroyed
The tyrants of the earth, O join your rage
To mine, O guide this trembling hand, and thou
Exterminating angel who defendest
The cause of Mahomet, inspire this heart
With all thy fierceness!—ha! what do I see?

SCENE VIII.

Zopir, Seid.

Zopir.—Seid, thou seemest disturbed; unhappy youth!
Why art thou ranked amongst my foes? my heart
Feels for thy woes, and trembles at thy danger;
Horrors on horrors crowd on every side;
My house may be a shelter from the storm.
Accept it, thou art welcome, for thy life
Is dear to Zopir.

Seid.— Gracious heaven! wilt thou
Protect me thus? will Zopir guard his foe?
What do I hear! O duty, conscience, virtue!
O Mahomet, this rives my heart.

Zop.— Perhaps
Thou art surprised to find that I can pity
An enemy, and wish for Seid's welfare;

I am a man like thee; that tie alone
Demands at least a sympathetic tear
For innocence afflicted: gracious gods,
Drive from this earth those base and savage men,
Who shed with joy their fellow-creatures' blood

Seid.—O glorious sentiments! and can there be
Such virtue in an infidel?

Zop.— Thou knowest
But little of that virtue, thus to stand
Astonished at it! O mistaken youth,
In what a maze of errors art thou lost!
Bound by a tyrant's savage laws, thou thinkest
Virtue resides in Mussulmans alone;
Thy master rules thee with a rod of iron,
And shackles thy free soul in shameful bonds;
Zopir thou hatest, alas! thou knowest him not:
I pardon thee because thou art the slave
Of Mahomet; but how canst thou believe
A God who teaches hatred, and delights
In discord?

Seid.— O I never can obey him!
I know, and feel I cannot hate thee, Zopir.

Zop.—Alas! the more I talk to him, the more
He gains upon me; his ingenuous look,
His youth, his candor, all conspire to charm me;
How could a follower of this vile impostor
Thus win my heart! who gave thee birth? what art thou?

Seid.—A wretched orphan; all I have on earth
Is a kind master, whom I never yet
Have disobeyed; howe'er my love for thee
May tempt me to betray him.

Zop.— Knowest thou not
Thy parents, then?

Seid.— His camp was the first object
My eyes beheld; his temple is my country;
I know no other; and amidst the crowd
Of yearly tributes to our holy prophet,

None e'er was treated with more tenderness
Than Seid was.

Zop.— I love his gratitude:
Thy kind return for benefits received
Merits my praise:—O why did heaven employ
The hand of Mahomet in such an office?
He was thy father, and Palmira's too;
Why dost thou sigh? why dost thou tremble thus?
Why turn thee from me? sure some dreadful thought
Hangs on thy mind.

Seid.— It must be so: the times
Are full of terror.

Zop.— If thou feelest remorse
Thy heart is guiltless; murder is abroad,
Let me preserve thy life.

Seid.— O gracious heaven!
And can I have a thought of taking thine?
Palmira! O my oath! O God of vengeance!

Zop.—For the last time remember I entreat thee
To follow me; away, thy fate depends
Upon this moment.

SCENE IX.

Zopir, Seid, Omar.

Omar.—(Entering hastily.) Traitor, Mahomet
Expects thee.

Seid.— O I know not where or what
I am; destruction, ruin and despair
On every side await me: whither now
Shall wretched Seid fly?

Omar.— To him whom God
Hath chosen, thy injured king, and master.

Seid.— Yes:
And there abjure the dreadful oath I made.

SCENE X.

Zopir.

Zopir.—(Alone.) The desperate youth is gone—I know not why,
But my heart beats for his distress; his looks,
His pity, his remorse, his every action
Affect me deeply: I must follow him.

SCENE XI.

Zopir, Phanor.

Phanor.—This letter, sir, was by an Arab given
In secret to me.

Zopir.— From Hercides! gods,
What do I read? will heaven in tenderest pity
At length repay me for a life of sorrows?
Hercides begs to see me—he who snatched
From this fond bosom my two helpless children;
They yet are living, so this paper tells me,
Slaves to the tyrant—Seid and Palmira
Are orphans both, and know not whence they sprang,
Perhaps my children—O delusive hope,
Why wilt thou flatter me? it cannot be;
Fain would I credit thee, thou sweet deceiver:
I fly to meet and to embrace my children;
Yes; I will see Hercides: let him come
At midnight to me, to this holy altar,
Where I so often have invoked the gods,
At last, perhaps, propitious to my vows:
O ye immortal powers, restore my children,
Give back to virtue's paths two generous hearts
Corrupted by an impious, vile usurper!
If Seid and Palmira are not mine,
If such is my hard fate, I will adopt
The noble pair, and be their father still.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Mahomet, Omar.

Omar.—My lord, our secret is discovered; Seid
Has told Hercides; we are on the verge
Of ruin, yet I know he will obey.

Mahomet.—Revealed it, sayest thou?

Omar.— Yes: Hercides loves him
With tenderness.

Ma.— Indeed, What said he to it?

Omar.—He stood aghast, and seemed to pity Zopir.

Ma.—He's weak, and therefore not to be entrusted;
Fools ever will be traitors; but no matter,
Let him take heed; a method may be found
To rid us of such dangerous witnesses:
Say, Omar, have my orders been obeyed?

Omar.—They have, my lord.

Ma.— 'Tis well: remember, Omar,
In one important hour or Mahomet
Or Zopir is no more; if Zopir dies,
The credulous people will adore that God
Who thus declared for me, and saved his prophet:
Be this our first great object; that once done,
Take care of Seid; art thou sure the poison
Will do its office?

Omar.— Fear it not, my lord.

Ma.—O we must work in secret, the dark shades
Of death must hide our purpose—while we shed
Old Zopir's blood, be sure you keep Palmira
In deepest ignorance; she must not know
The secret of her birth: her bliss and mine
Depend upon it; well thou knowest, my triumphs
From error's fruitful source incessant flow:
The ties of blood, and all their boasted power
Are mere delusions: what are nature's bonds?
Nothing but habit, the mere force of custom:
Palmira knows no duty but obedience

To me; I am her lord, her king, her father,
Perhaps may add the name of husband to them:
Her little heart will beat with proud ambition
To captivate her master—but the hour
Approaches that must rid me of my foe,
The hated Zopir: Seid is prepared—
And see, he comes: let us retire.

Omar.— Observe
His wild demeanor; rage and fierce resentment
Possess his soul.

SCENE II.

Mahomet, Omar, retired to one side of the stage; Seid at the farther end.

Seid.— This dreadful duty then
Must be fulfilled.

Mahomet.—(To Omar.) Let us begone, in search
Of other means to make our power secure.
(Exit with Omar.)

Seid.—(Alone.) I could not answer: one reproachful word
From Mahomet sufficed: if heaven requires it of me,
I must obey; but it will cost me dear.

SCENE III.

Seid, Palmira.

Seid.—Palmira, art thou here? what fatal cause
Hath led thee to this seat of horror?

Palmira.— Fear
And love directed me to find thee, Seid,
To ask thee what dread sacrifice thou meanest
To offer here; do heaven and Mahomet
Demand it of thee, must it be? O speak.

Seid.—Palmira, thou commandest my every thought
And every action; all depend on thee:
Direct them as thou wilt, inform my soul,
And guide my hand: be thou my guardian god,

Explain the will of heaven which yet I know not;
Why am I chosen to be its instrument
Of vengeance? are the prophet's dread commands
Irrevocable?

Pal.— Seid, we must yield in silence,
Nor dare to question his decrees; he hears
Our secret sighs, nor are our sorrows hid
From Mahomet's all-seeing eye: to doubt
Is profanation of the deity.
His God is God alone; he could not else
Be thus victorious, thus invincible.

Seid.—He must be Seid's God who is Palmira's:
Yet cannot my astonished soul conceive
A being, tender, merciful, and kind,
Commanding murder; then again I think
To doubt is guilt: the priest without remorse
Destroys the victim: by the voice of heaven
I know that Zopir was condemned, I know
That Seid was predestined to support
The law divine: so Mahomet ordained,
And I obey him; fired with holy zeal
I go to slay the enemy of God;
And yet methinks another deity
Draws back my arm, and bids me spare the victim:
Religion lost her power when I beheld
The wretched Zopir; duty urged in vain
Her cruel plea, exhorting me to murder;
With joy I listened to the plaintive voice
Of soft humanity: but Mahomet—
How awful! how majestic! who can bear
His wrath? his frowns reproached my shameful weakness;
Religion is a dreadful power: alas!
Palmira, I am lost in doubts and fears,
Discordant passions tear this feeble heart:
I must be impious, must desert my faith,
Or be a murderer: Seid was not formed
For an assassin; but 'tis heaven's command,
And I have promised to avenge its cause:
The tears of grief and rage united flow,

Contending duties raise a storm within,
And thou alone, Palmira, must appease it;
Fix my uncertain heart, and give it peace:
Alas! without this dreadful sacrifice,
The tie that binds us is forever broke;
This only can secure thee.

Pal.— Am I then
The price of blood, of Zopir's blood?

Seid.— So heaven
And Mahomet decree.

Pal.— Love ne'er was meant
To make us cruel, barbarous, and inhuman.

Seid.—To Zopir's murderer, and to him alone,
Palmira must be given.

Pal.— O hard condition!

Seid.—But 'tis the will of Mahomet and heaven.

Pal.—Alas!

Seid.— Thou knowest the dreadful curse that waits
On disobedience—everlasting pain.

Pal.—If thou must be the instrument of vengeance,
If at thy hands the blood which thou hast promised
Shall be required——

Seid.— What's to be done?

Pal.— I tremble
To think of it—yet——

Seid.— It must be so then: thou
Hast fixed his doom; Palmira has consented.

Pal.—Did I consent?

Seid.— Thou didst.

Pal.— Detested thought!
What have I said?

Seid.— By thee the voice of heaven
Speaks its last dread command, and I obey:
Yon fatal altar is the chosen seat
Of Zopir's worship, there he bends the knee
To his false gods; retire, my sweet Palmira.

Pal.—I cannot leave thee.

Seid.— Thou must not be witness
To such a deed of horror: these, Palmira,
Are dreadful moments: fly to yonder grove,
Thou wilt be near the prophet there: away.

Pal.—Zopir must die then?

Seid.— Yes: this fatal hand
Must drag him to the earth, there murder him,
And bathe yon ruined altar in his blood.

Pal.—Die by thy hand! I shudder at the thought:
But see! he comes; just heaven!
(The farther part of the stage opens, and discovers an altar.)
I cannot stay as.

SCENE IV.

Seid, Palmira, on one side; Zopir, standing near the altar.

Zopir.— Ye guardian gods
Of Mecca, threatened by an impious sect
Of vile impostors, now assert your power,
And let your Zopir's prayers, perhaps the last
He e'er shall make, be heard! the feeble bonds
Of our short peace are broken, and fierce war
Vindictive rages; O if ye support
The cause of this usurper——

Seid.—(Aside to Palmira.) Hear, Palmira,
How he blasphemes!

Zopir.— May death be Zopir's lot!
I wish for naught on earth but to behold,
In my last hour, and to embrace my children,
To die in their loved arms, if yet they live,
If they are here, for something whispers me
That I shall see them still.

Pal.—(Aside to Seid.) His children, said he?

Zop.—O I should die with pleasure at the sight:
Watch over and protect them, ye kind gods,
O let them think like me, but not like me
Be wretched!

Seid.— See! he prays to his false gods:
This is the time to end him. (Draws his sword.)

Pal.— Do not, Seid.

Seid.—To serve my God, to please and merit thee,
This sword, devoted to the cause of heaven,
Is drawn, and shall destroy its deadliest foe:
Yon dreary walk invites me to the deed,
Methinks the path is bloody, wandering ghosts
Glide through the shade, and beckon me away.

Pal.—What sayest thou, Seid?

Seid.— Ministers of death,
I follow you; conduct me to the altar,
And guide my trembling hand!

Pal.— It must not be;
'Tis horrible: O stop, my Seid.

Seid.— No:
The hour is come, and see! the altar shakes.

Pal.—'Tis heaven's assent, and we must doubt no more.

Seid.—Means it to urge me on, or to restrain?
Our prophet will reproach me for this weakness:
Palmira!

Pal.— Well!

Seid.— Address thyself to heaven;
I go to do the deed.
(He goes behind the altar where Zopir is retired.)

Pal.—(Alone.) O dreadful moment!
What do I feel within! my blood runs cold:
And yet if heaven demands the sacrifice,
Am I to judge, to ask, or to complain?
Where is the heart that knows itself, that knows
Its innocence or guilt? We must obey:
But hark! methought I heard the plaintive voice
Of death; the deed is done—alas! my Seid.

Seid.—(Returns looking wildly around.) What voice was that? where am I? where's Palmira?
I cannot see Palmira; O she's gone,
She's lost forever.

Pal.— Art thou blind to her
Who only lives for thee?

Seid.— Where are we?

Pal.— Speak,
My Seid, is the dreadful sacrifice
Performed, and thy sad promise all fulfilled?

Seid.—What sayest thou?

Pal.— Zopir? is he dead?

Seid.— Who? Zopir?

Pal.—Good heaven, preserve his senses!—come, my Seid,
Let us be gone.

Seid.— How will these tottering limbs
Support me!—I recover—is it you,
Palmira?

Pal.— Yes: what hast thou done?

Seid.— Obeyed
The voice of heaven, seized with this desperate hand
His silver hairs, and dragged him to the earth:
'Twas thy command: O God! thou couldst not bid me
Commit a crime! trembling and pale a while
I stood aghast, then drew this sacred sword,
And plunged it in his bosom: what a look
Of tenderness and love the poor old man
Cast on his murderer! a scene so mournful
Ne'er did these eyes behold: my heart retains
And will forever keep the sad idea:
Would I were dead like him!

Pal.— Let us repair
To Mahomet, the prophet will protect us;
Here you're in danger; follow me.

Seid.— I cannot:
Palmira, pity me.

Pal.— What mournful thought
Can thus depress thee?

Seid.— O if thou hadst seen
His tender looks, when from his bleeding side
He drew the fatal weapon forth, and cried:
"Dear Seid, poor unhappy Seid!" Oh,
That voice, those looks, and Zopir at my feet
Weltering in blood, are still before my eyes:
What have we done?

Pal.— I tremble for thy life:
O in the name of all the sacred ties
That bind us, fly, and save thyself.

Seid.— Away,
And leave me: why did thy ill-fated love
Command this dreadful sacrifice, Palmira?
Without thy cruel order heaven itself
Had never been obeyed.

Pal.— Unkind reproach!
Couldst thou but know what thy Palmira suffers
How wouldst thou pity her!

Seid.— What dreadful object
Is that before us?
(Zopir rises up slowly from behind the altar, and leans upon it.)

Pal.— 'Tis the murdered Zopir;
Bloody and pale he drags his mangled limbs
Toward us.

Seid.— Wilt thou go to him?

Pal.— I must;
For pity and remorse distract my soul,
And draw me to him.

Zop.—(Comes forward leaning on Palmira.) Gentle maid, support me! (He sits down.)
Ungrateful Seid, thou hast slain me; now
Thou weepest; alas! too late.

SCENE V.

Zopir, Seid, Palmira, Phanor.

Phanor.— O dreadful sight!
What's here?

Zopir.— I wish I could have seen my friend
Hercides—Phanor, art thou there?—behold
My murderer. (Points to Seid.)

Phan.— O guilt! accursed deed!
Unhappy Seid, look upon—thy father.

Seid.—Who?

Palmira.—He?

Seid.— My father?

Zop.— Gracious heavens!

Phan.— Hercides
In his last moments took me in his arms,
And weeping cried: "If there be time, O haste
Prevent a parricide, and stop the arm
Of Seid;" in my breast the tyrant lodged
The dreadful secret; now I suffer for it,
And die by Mahomet's detested hand:
Haste, Phanor, fly, inform the hapless Zopir,
That Seid and Palmira are—his children.

Seid.—Palmira!

Pal.— Thou my brother?

Zop.— O ye gods!
O nature, thou hast not deceived me then,
When thou didst plead for them! unhappy Seid,
What could have urged thee to so foul a deed?

Seid.—(Kneeling.) My gratitude, my duty, my religion,
All that mankind hold sacred, urged me on
To do the worst of actions:—give me back
That fatal weapon.

Pal.—(Laying hold of Seid's arm.) Plunge it in my breast;
I was the cause of my dear father's murder;
And incest is the price of parricide.

Seid.—Strike both: heaven hath not punishment enough
For crimes like ours.

Zop.—(Embracing them.) Let me embrace my children:
The gods have poured into my cup of sorrow
A draught of sweetest happiness: I die
Contented, and resign me to my fate:
But you must live, my children; you, my Seid,
And you, Palmira, by the sacred name
Of nature, by thy dying father's blood,
Fast flowing from the wound which thou hast made,
Let me entreat you, live; revenge yourselves,
Avenge the injured Zopir, but preserve

Your gracious lives; the great, the important hour
Approaches, that must change the mournful scene:
The offended people, ere to-morrow's dawn,
Will rise in arms and punish the usurper;
My blood will add fresh fuel to their rage;
Let us await the issue.

Seid.— O I fly
To sacrifice the monster, to take vengeance
For a dear father's life, or lose my own.

SCENE VI.

Zopir, Seid, Palmira, Omar, Attendants.

Omar.—Guards, seize the murderer; Mahomet is come
To punish guilt, and execute the laws.

Zopir.—What do I hear?

Seid.— Did Mahomet command thee
To punish Seid?

Palmira.— Execrable tyrant!
Was not the murder done by thy command?

Omar.—'Twas not commanded.

Seid.— Well have I deserved
This just reward of my credulity.

Omar.—Soldiers, obey.

Pal.— O stop, ye shall not——

Omar.— Madame,
If Seid's life is dear to you, submit
With patience, lest the prophet's anger fall
Like thunder on your head; if you obey,
Great Mahomet is able to protect you:
Guards, lead her to the king.

Pal.— O take me, death,
From this sad scene of never-ending woe!
(Seid and Palmira are carried off.)

Zop.—(To Phanor.) They're gone, they're lost: O most unhappy father,

The wound which Seid gave is not so deep,
So painful as this parting.

Phan.— See, my lord,
The day appears, and the armed multitudes
Press onward to defend the cause of Zopir.

Zop.—Support me, Phanor: yet thy friend may live
To punish this vile hypocrite; at least
In death may serve my dear—my cruel—children.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Mahomet, Omar, Guards at a distance.

Omar.—Zopir's approaching death alarms the people,
We have endeavored to appease their clamors,
And disavowed all knowledge of the deed;
To some, we called it the avenging hand
Of heaven that favors thus its prophet's cause:
With others, we lament his fall, and boast
Thy awful justice that will soon avenge it.
The crowd attentive listen to thy praise,
And all the danger of the storm is o'er;
If aught remains of busy faction's rage
It is but as the tossing of the waves
After the tempest, when the vault of heaven
Is placid and serene.

Mahomet.— Be it our care
To keep it so: where are my valiant bands?

Omar.—All ready; Osman in the dead of night
By secret paths conducted them to Mecca.

Mahomet.—'Tis strange that men must either be deceived
Or forced into obedience: Seid knows not
It is a father's blood that he has shed?

Omar.—Who could inform him of it? he alone
Who knew the secret is no more; Hercides
Is gone, and Seid soon shall follow him;
For know, he has already drunk the poison;
His crime was punished ere it was committed:
Even whilst he dragged his father to the altar

Death lurked within his veins; he cannot live:
Palmira, too, is safe; she may be useful:
I've given her hopes of Seid's pardon: that
May win her to our cause; she dare not murmur,
Besides, her heart is flexible and soft,
Formed to obey, to worship Mahomet,
And make him soon the happiest of mankind:
Trembling and pale, behold! they bring her to thee.

Mahomet.—Collect my forces, Omar, and return.

SCENE II.

Mahomet, Palmira, Guards.

Palmira.—O heaven! where am I? gracious God!

Mahomet.— Palmira,
Be not alarmed; already I have fixed
Thy fate and Mecca's: know, the great event
That fills thy soul with horror is a mystery
'Twixt heaven and me that's not to be revealed:
But thou art free, and happy: think no more
Of Seid, nor lament him; leave to me
The fate of men; be thankful for thy own:
Thou knowest that Mahomet hath loved thee long,
That I have ever been a father to thee;
Perhaps a nobler fate, and fairer title
May grace thee still, if thou deservest it; therefore
Blot from thy memory the name of Seid,
And let thy soul aspire to greater blessings
Than it could dare to hope for; let thy heart
Be my last noblest victory, and join
The conquered world to own me for its master.

Pal.—What joys, what blessings, or what happiness
Can I expect from thee, thou vile impostor?
Thou bloody savage! This alone was wanting,
This cruel insult to complete my woes:
Eternal Father, look upon this king,
This holy prophet, this all-powerful god
Whom I adored: thou monster, to betray

Two guiltless hearts into the crying sin
Of parricide; thou infamous seducer
Of my unguarded youth, how darest thou think,
Stained as thou art with my dear father's blood,
To gain Palmira's heart? but know, proud tyrant,
Thou art not yet invincible: the veil
Is off that hid thee, and the hand of vengeance
Upraised to scourge thy guilt: dost thou not hear
The maddening multitude already armed
In the defense of injured innocence?
From death's dark shades my murdered father comes
To lead them on: O that these feeble hands
Could tear thee piece-meal, thee and all thy train!
Would I could see them weltering in their blood;
See Mecca, and Medina, Asia, all
Combined against thee! that the credulous world
Would shake off thy vile chains, and thy religion
Become the jest and scorn of all mankind
To after ages! may that hell, whose threats
Thou hast so often denounced 'gainst all who dared
To doubt thy false divinity, now open
Her fiery gates, and be thy just reward!
These are the thanks I owe thee for thy bounties,
And these the prayers I made for Mahomet.

Ma.—I see I am betrayed; but be it so:
Whoe'er thou art, learn henceforth to obey;
For know, my heart——

SCENE III.

Mahomet, Palmira, Omar, Ali, Attendants.

Omar.— The secret is revealed;
Hercides told it in his dying moments:
The people all enraged have forced the prison:
They're up in arms, and bearing on their shoulders
The bloody corpse of their unhappy chief,
Lament his fate, and cry aloud for vengeance:
All is confusion: Seid at their head
Excites them to rebellion, and cries out,

"I am a parricide;" with rage and grief
He seems distracted; with one voice the crowd
Unite to curse the prophet and his God:
Even those who promised to admit our forces
Within the walls of Mecca, have conspired
With them to raise their desperate arms against thee;
And naught is heard but cries of death and vengeance.

Palmira.—Just heaven pursue him, and defend the cause
Of innocence!

Mahomet.—(To Omar.) Well, what have we to fear?

Omar.—Omar, my lord, with your few faithful friends,
Despising danger, are prepared to brave
The furious storm, and perish at your feet.

Ma.—Alone I will defend you all; come near:
Behold, and say I act like Mahomet.

SCENE IV.

Mahomet, Omar, and his party on one side, Seid, and the people on the other; Palmira in the middle.

Seid.—Avenge my father, seize the traitor.

Mahomet.— People,
Born to obey me, listen to your master.

Seid.—Hear not the monster; follow me:
(He comes forward a little, and then staggers.)
O heaven!
What sudden darkness spreads o'er my dim eyes?
Now strike, my friends—O I am dying.

Ma.— Ha!
Then all is well.

Palmira.— My brother, canst thou shed
No blood but Zopir's?

Seid.— Yes: come on—I cannot;
Some god unnerves me. (He faints.)

Ma.— Hence let every foe
Of Mahomet be taught to fear and tremble:
Know, ye proud infidels, this hand alone

Hath power to crush you all, to me the God
Of nature delegates his sovereign power:
Acknowledge then his prophet, and his laws,
'Twixt Mahomet and Seid let that God
Decide the contest, which of us forever
Is guilty, now, this moment let him perish!

Pal.—My brother—Seid—can this monster boast
Such power? the people stand astonished at him,
And tremble at his voice; and wilt thou yield
To Mahomet?

Seid.—(Supported by his attendants.) Alas! the hand of heaven
Is on me, and the involuntary crime
Is too severely punished: O Palmira,
In vain was Seid virtuous: O if heaven
Chastises thus our errors, what must crimes
Like thine expect, detested Mahomet?
What cause hast thou to tremble—O I die;
Receive me gracious heaven, and spare Palmira. (Dies.)

Pal.—'Tis not, ye people, 'tis not angry heaven
Pursues my Seid. No: he's poisoned——

Ma.—(Interrupting her, and addressing himself to the people.)
Learn
From Seid's fate, ye unbelievers, how
To reverence Mahomet who heaven defends;
Nature and death, ye see, have heard my voice,
And this pale corpse hath witnessed their obedience;
The sword of fate hangs o'er your heads, beware
It fall not on you: thus will I reward
All impious rebels, all vile infidels,
And punish every word and thought against me.
If I withhold my rage, and let you live,
Remember, traitors, that you owe your beings
To my indulgence; hasten to the temple,
Prostrate yourselves before the throne of grace,
And deprecate the wrath of Mahomet.
(The people retire.)

Pal.—O stay, and hear me, people—the barbarian
Poisoned my brother—monster, raised by crimes

To empire thus, and deified by guilt,
Thou murderer of Palmira's hapless race,
Complete thy work, and take my wretched life:
O my dear brother, let me follow thee!
(She seizes her brother's sword and stabs herself.)

Ma.—Seize, and prevent her——

Pal.— 'Tis too late; I die:
And dying hope a God more just than thine
Has yet in store a state of happiness
For injured innocence: let Mahomet
Reign here in peace: this world was made for tyrants.
(Dies.)

Ma.—She's gone; she's lost; the only dear reward
I wished to keep of all my crimes: in vain
I fought, and conquered; Mahomet is wretched
Without Palmira: Conscience, now I feel thee,
And feel that thou canst rive the guilty heart.
O thou eternal God, whom I have made
The instrument of ill, whom I have wronged,
Braved, and blasphemed; O thou whom yet I fear,
Behold me self-condemned, behold me wretched,
Even whilst the world adores me: vain was all
My boasted power: I have deceived mankind;
But how shall I impose on my own heart?
A murdered father, and two guiltless children
Must be avenged: come, ye unhappy victims,
And end me quickly!—Omar, we must strive
To hide this shameful weakness, save my glory,
And let me reign o'er a deluded world:
For Mahomet depends on fraud alone,
And to be worshipped never must be known.

SOCRATES

BY VOLTAIRE

(Translated by Oliver H. G. Leigh.)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SOCRATES.

ANITUS, High Priest of Ceres.

MELITUS, one of the Judges of Athens.

XANTIPPE, Wife of Socrates.

AGLAE, a young Athenian lady, brought up by Socrates.

SOPHRONIMUS, a young Athenian gentleman, brought up by Socrates.

DRIXA, TERPANDER, ACROS, friends of Anitus.

Judges. Disciples of Socrates, and three Pedants, Protected by Anitus.

Socrates.

ARGUMENT.

In Voltaire's drama on the Socratic episode, it was mainly the jealousy of a rejected lover that led to the foulest of judicial murders. Anitus, high-priest of Ceres, is in love with Aglae, a ward of Socrates; but she will have none of him, for her heart is set on Sophronimus, a disciple of the great philosopher, and for the other she has nothing but repulsion and disdain. Urged on by Drixa, his former mistress, Anitus has Socrates brought before the Court of the Areopagus, where his speeches, though containing nothing new, are uttered with such dignity of sentiment and phrase as to redeem a drama which otherwise is of no special merit. If the trial and death scene are slightly burlesqued, it is with the light touch of Voltaire, who seemed incapable of treating any subject altogether in a serious vein.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Anitus, Drixa, Terpander, Acros.

Anitus.—My dear confidante, and you my trusty friends, you well know how much money I have put into your pockets this last feast of Ceres; I am now going to be married, and I

hope you will all do your respective duties on this great occasion.

Drixa.—That, my lord, we most certainly shall, provided you give us an opportunity of getting a little more by it.

Ani.—I shall want of you, Madame Drixa, two fine Persian carpets; from you, Terpander, I must have two large silver candlesticks; and from you, half a dozen robes.

Terpander.—A considerable demand, my lord; but there is nothing which we would not do to merit your holy protection.

Ani.—O you will be rewarded for it a hundredfold: 'tis the best means to gain the favor of the gods: give much, and much you shall receive; but, above all, fail not, I beseech you, to stir up the people against all the rich and great, who are deficient in paying their vows and presenting their offerings.

Acros.—On that, my lord, you may depend; it is a duty too sacred ever to be neglected by us.

Ani.—'Tis well, my friends; may heaven continue to inspire you with the same just and pious sentiments, and be assured you will prosper; you, your children, and your children's children, to all posterity.

Ter.—You have said it, my lord, and therefore it must be so.

SCENE II.

Anitus, Drixa.

Anitus.—Well, my dear Drixa, I believe you will have no objection to my marrying Aglae; I shall not love you the less, and we may still live together as we used to do.

Drixa.—O my lord, I am not jealous; as long as trade goes on well, I am contented. While I had the honor of being one of your mistresses, I was a woman of some consequence in Athens: but if you are in love with Aglae, I, in my turn, am as fond of young Sophronimus: and Xantippe, Socrates' wife, has promised that he shall marry me. I shall be always, notwithstanding, as much at your service as ever. I am only vexed that this young fellow has been brought up with that rascal Socrates, and that Aglae is still in his hands. We must take them both out as fast as we can. Xantippe will be glad

to get rid of them. The beautiful Sophronimus and the fair Aglae have a sad time of it with the surly Socrates.

Ani.—I am in great hopes, my dear, that Melitus and I together shall soon be able to destroy this dangerous fellow, who preaches nothing but virtue and divinity, and has taken the liberty to laugh at some certain adventures that happened at the mysteries of Ceres: but he is Aglae's tutor: her father, Agathon, they tell me, has left her a great fortune: in short, Aglae is a charming girl; I love her, and I will marry her; and as to Socrates, I shall take care of him.

Dri.—Do what you please with Socrates, so I can but get my dear Sophronimus; but how could that fool Agathon leave his daughter in the hands of this old flat-nosed Socrates, that intolerable reasoner, who corrupts all our young men, and keeps them away from courtesans and the mysteries?

Ani.—Agathon himself was tainted with the same vile principles: he was one of your sober, serious fools, whose manners differed in every respect from ours; a man, in short, of another age, one of our sworn and inveterate enemies, who think they have fulfilled every duty when they worship God, assist man, cultivate friendships and study philosophy; one of those ridiculous creatures who insolently deny that the gods prognosticate future events by the liver of an ox; those merciless reasoners, who find fault with priests for sacrificing young girls, or passing a night with them on occasion. These, you see, Drixa, are a kind of people not fit to live. As to Socrates, I should have been glad to have him strangled long ago. However, I have agreed to meet him here in the portico, and talk with him about the marriage.

Dri.—Here he comes: you do him too much honor: but I must leave you, and talk to Xantippe about my young man.

Ani.—The gods conduct you, my dear Drixa; remember to serve them, and don't forget my two fine Persian carpets.

SCENE III.

Anitus, Socrates.

Anitus.—Good morning, my dear Socrates, thou favorite of the gods and wisest of men; methinks every time I see you I

am raised above myself; in you I look up with admiration to the dignity of human nature.

Socrates.—O my lord, I am a plain, simple man, as void of knowledge and as full of weakness as any of my fellow-creatures: it is enough for me if you can bear with me.

Ani.—Bear with? I admire you, and would it were possible I could resemble you! To convince you of it, and that I may oftener be a witness to your virtues and improve by your instructions, I am willing to espouse your fair pupil, Aglae, whom I find you have the entire disposal of.

Soc.—It is true, indeed, that her father, Agathon, who was my friend, the dearest of all relations, bequeathed to my care, by his last will, this amiable and virtuous orphan.

Ani.—With a considerable fortune, no doubt, for I hear she is one of the best matches in all Athens.

Soc.—With regard to that I can give you no information; her father, my dearest friend, whose will is ever sacred to me, forbade me to divulge the situation of her affairs in that point.

Ani.—This respect and discreet veneration for the last will of your friend are worthy of your noble soul; but it is well enough known that Agathon was rich.

Soc.—He deserved to be so, if riches are a mark of the divine favor.

Ani.—They tell me a young coxcomb, named Sophronimus, makes love to her on account of her fortune; but I am persuaded you will not give encouragement to such a fellow, and that Anitus will have no rival.

Soc.—I know in what light I ought to consider a person like you; but it is not for me to thwart the inclinations of Aglae. I would supply the place of a father to her, but I am not her master: she has a right to dispose of her own heart: I look upon restraint in this case as a crime: talk to her: if she hearkens to your proposal, with all my heart, I have no objection.

Ani.—I have your wife's consent already; without doubt she is acquainted with Aglae's sentiments, and therefore I look upon the affair as good as concluded.

Soc.—But I never look upon things as done 'till they are really so.

SCENE IV.

Socrates, Anitus, Aglae.

Socrates.—Come hither, Aglae, and determine for yourself. Here is a person of considerable rank, who offers himself to you for a husband: you are at liberty to explain yourself to him: my presence might perhaps be a restraint upon you: whatever choice you make I shall approve: Xantippe will prepare everything for your nuptials.

Aglae.—Generous Socrates! I am sorry you leave me.

Anitus.—You seem, charming Aglae, to place great confidence in the good Socrates.

Agl.—It is my duty, sir; he has been a father to me; he has educated and instructed me.

Ani.—And pray, my dear, as he has instructed you, tell me what is your opinion of Ceres, Cybele and Venus?

Agl.—Of them, sir, I will think just as you please.

Ani.—'Tis well said, and you will do as I please, too, then, I hope.

Agl.—No, sir; that is quite another affair.

Ani.—You see, the wise Socrates consents to our marriage, and Xantippe above all things wishes for it. You know my passion for you, and are no stranger to my rank and fortune; my happiness, perhaps your own, too, depends on one word, therefore determine.

Agl.—I will answer you, sir, with that truth and sincerity which the great man who just now left us taught me never to depart from: I respect your dignity, know but little of your person, and, in a word, can never be yours.

Ani.—Never? cruel Aglae, are you not free? you will not then?

Agl.—No, sir; I cannot.

Ani.—What an affront, what an indignity is this! but 'tis to Socrates I am obliged for it: he dictated your answer, I know he did; he prefers Sophronimus to me, that unworthy rival, that impious——

Agl.—Sophronimus is not impious, not unworthy; Socrates has loved him from his infancy; he has been a father to us both. Sophronimus is all beauty and all virtue; I love, and am beloved by him; it is in my power to marry him if I think proper; but I shall no more be his than yours.

Ani.—You astonish me: what! own you love Sophronimus?

Agl.—Yes, sir, I own it, because it is true.

Ani.—And yet when it is in your power to make yourself happy with him, refuse him your hand?

Agl.—That, sir, is no less true.

Ani.—Then I suppose your fear of displeasing me prevents your engaging with him?

Agl.—No such thing, I assure you: for, having never wished to please, I have no fear of displeasing you.

Ani.—You dread, then, perhaps, the displeasure of the gods, at seeing you prefer a profane wretch, like Sophronimus, to a high priest?

Agl.—Not in the least. I am persuaded it is matter of very little concern to the supreme being whether I marry you or not.

Ani.—The supreme being! my dear child, you should not talk in this manner; you should say the gods and goddesses: take care, for I see you entertain some very dangerous opinions; but I know too well from whom they came. Learn, then, that Ceres, whose priest I am, may punish you for thus despising her worship and her minister.

Agl.—I despise neither the one nor the other. I have been told that Ceres presides over the harvest, and I believe it; but she has nothing to do with my marriage.

Ani.—She has to do with everything; you know it; but I hope I shall be able to convert you. Are you, indeed, resolved not to marry Sophronimus?

Agl.—Yes; I am resolved, and am very sorry for it.

Ani.—I cannot understand a word of all these contradictions: but observe me; I love you, would have made you happy, and advanced you to rank and dignity: be advised, and reject not the offers which kind fortune thus courts you to accept: remember that everything should be sacrificed to our real interest; that youth will pass away, but riches remain; that

wealth and honors should be your first concern, and that I speak to you on the part of the gods. I beg you will reflect seriously on what I have said: farewell; my dear girl, I shall pray to Ceres that she would inspire you, and still flatter myself she will touch your heart. Once more, adieu; remember, you have promised me never to marry Sophronimus.

Agl.—I promised myself, but not you. (Exit Anitus.) (Alone.) This man but makes me more unhappy. I know not why it is, but I never see him without shuddering: but here comes Sophronimus: alas! whilst his rival fills my heart with terror, he increases my tenderness and doubles my disquietude.

SCENE V.

Aglae, Sophronimus.

Sophronimus.—My dear Aglae, I met Anitus, the priest of Ceres, that worst of men, the sworn enemy of Socrates, just coming from you: your eyes seem bathed in tears.

Aglae.—Is he the enemy of our benefactor, too? Then, indeed, I wonder not at my aversion to him, even before he spoke.

Soph.—And is he the cause of your tears, my Aglae?

Agl.—No, Sophronimus, he can inspire nothing but hatred and disgust: my tears can flow for you alone.

Soph.—For me? O gods, for me, who would repay them with my blood; for me, who adore you, who hope to be beloved by Aglae, who only live for and would die for you? Shall I reproach myself with having embittered one moment of your life? Aglae weeps, and Sophronimus is the cause. What have I done? what crime have I committed?

Agl.—None, my Sophronimus: you could not do it: 'tis not in your nature. I wept because you merit all my tenderness, because you have it, and because I must renounce you.

Soph.—What dreadful sentence have you pronounced against me? I cannot believe you: you love me, you said you did, and Aglae can never change. You have promised to be mine, you cannot wish my death.

Agl.—No; I would have thee live and be happy: but, alas! I cannot make you so: I hoped I could, but fortune has deceived me. I swear to you, Sophronimus, since I cannot be yours, I never will be another's. I have declared so to Anitus, who courts me, and whom I despise; and here I declare the same to you, with a heart full of grief, tenderness and love.

Soph.—Since you love me, I must live; but if you refuse me your hand, it will be death to Sophronimus; therefore, my dearest Aglae, in the name of love, of all your charms, and all your virtues, explain to me this dreadful mystery.

SCENE VI.

Socrates, Sophronimus, Aglae.

Sophronimus.—O my honored master, my father and my friend, behold in Sophronimus the most unfortunate of men, though in the presence of the only two beings upon earth who could make me happy: Socrates first taught me wisdom, and from Aglae I learned to love; you consented to our marriage, and this beauteous fair one, who seemed so desirous of it, now refuses me; and whilst she says she loves, plunges a dagger into my heart: she has broken off the match without assigning any cause for her cruel caprice: O Socrates, prevent my misery, or teach me, if possible, how to bear it.

Socrates.—Aglae is mistress of herself; her father made me her tutor, but not her tyrant; to see you united would have made me happy: if she has changed her mind I am surprised and sorry for it: but let us hear her reasons; if they are good, we must submit to them.

Soph.—It is impossible they should.

Aglae.—To me, however, they appear so, but you shall hear them. When you first opened my father's will, most noble Socrates, you told me he had left me a sufficient competency; from that moment I resolved to bestow my fortune on the good Sophronimus, who has no support but you, no riches but his virtue: you applauded my resolution. How great was my happiness, in promoting that of him whom you have so long regarded as your own son! full of this pleasing hope, I laid

open the situation of my heart to Xantippe, who at once undeceived me. She treated me as an idle visionary; showed me the will of my father, who died a beggar, and left me nothing but your friendship to depend on. Awakened from my dream of promised happiness, nothing remained for me but the melancholy reflection that it was no longer in my power to make the fortune of Sophronimus: I would not oppress him with the weight of my misfortunes.

Soph.—I told you, Socrates, her reasons were poor and insufficient. If she loves me, am I not rich enough? Hitherto, it is true, I have subsisted from your bounty; but there is no employment, however irksome, which I would not undertake, to provide for my dearest Aglae: I ought, indeed, to make her a sacrifice of my passion, to find out some richer, happier lover for her: but I own my weakness, I cannot do it, there I am, indeed, unworthy of her; but if she could content herself with my low estate, if she could stoop to my humble condition: but I dare not hope so much; I sink beneath a misfortune which her fortitude is able to bear.

Soc.—My dear children, it was very indiscreet in Xantippe to show you the will; but believe me, Aglae, she deceived you.

Agl.—Indeed she has not: I saw it with my own eyes: I know my father's hand too well to have the least doubt of it: but be assured, Socrates, I shall be able to bear poverty as I ought: these hands will support me; if I can but live, it is enough for me, but it is not for Sophronimus.

Soph.—It is too much, a thousand times too much for me: thou tender, noble soul, worthy of thy illustrious master: a virtuous and laborious poverty is the natural state of man. I wish I could have offered you a throne, but if you will condescend to live with Sophronimus, our respectable poverty will be superior to the throne of Crœsus.

Soc.—Your generous sentiments at once delight and distress me: I behold with transport those virtues budding forth in your heart, which I myself had sown: never were my hopes better fulfilled than in Aglae and Sophronimus: but once more believe me, Aglae, my wife has misinformed you: you are richer than you think you are: it was not to her, but to me, your

father entrusted you. May he not have left you a fortune which Xantippe knows nothing of?

Agl.—No, Socrates, he says expressly in his will that he has left me poor.

Soc.—And I tell you that you are deceived, that he has left you a sufficient competency to enable you to live happily with the virtuous Sophronimus, and that I desire, therefore, you would come and sign the contract immediately.

SCENE VII.

Socrates, Xantippe, Aglae, Sophronimus.

Xantippe.—Come, come, child, don't stand amusing yourself there with my husband's visions and nonsense: philosophy, to be sure, is a mighty pretty thing when folks have nothing else to do: but you are a beggar, child, and must study how to live first, and philosophize afterward. I have concluded your marriage with Anitus, a worthy priest, and a man of fortune. Come, child, follow me, let me have no delays nor contradiction; I love to be obeyed: quick, quick, my dear, 'tis for your good, therefore let me have none of your reasonings, but follow me.

Sophronimus.—O heaven! my dear Aglae!

Socrates.—Let her talk, and trust to me for your happiness.

Xan.—Let me talk, indeed! I shall talk and do, too, I assure you. You are a pretty one, to be sure, with your wisdom, your familiar demon, your irony and all your nonsense that signifies nothing, to trouble yourself about matrimony: you are a good sort of a man, but you really know nothing of the world; happy is it for you that I am able to govern you. Come, Aglae, I must settle you as soon as possible. And you, sir, there, that seem as if you were thunderstruck, I have taken care of you, too: Drixa is the woman for you: you will both of you thank me by and by: I shall have done it all in a minute: I am very expeditious: let us lose no time, therefore; by rights it should have been all over before this.

Soc.—My children, don't thwart or provoke her, but pay

her all kind of deference: we must comply with since we can't mend her: it is the triumph of reason to live well with those who have none.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Socrates, Sophronimus.

Sophronimus.—Divine Socrates, I know not how to believe my own happiness: how can Aglae, whose father died in extreme poverty, be possessed of so considerable a fortune?

Socrates.—I told you before, she had more than she thought she had: I knew her father's affairs better than herself: let it suffice that you both enjoy a fortune which you deserve: the secrets of the dead should be preserved as religiously as those of the living.

Soph.—I am only afraid the priest of Ceres, to whom you have preferred Sophronimus, will endeavor to avenge Aglae's refusal upon you: he is a man whom we have reason to dread.

Soc.—What has he to fear who does his duty? I know the malice of my enemies; I know all their calumnies; but when we take care never to offend God, and endeavor to do all the good we can to mankind, then is it that we are afraid of nothing, or whilst we live, or when we die.

Soph.—I know it well; yet I should die with grief if the happiness you bestowed on me should induce your enemies to put your virtue to the trial.

SCENE II.

Socrates, Sophronimus, Aglae.

Aglae.—O my benefactor, my father, let me fall at your feet, thou more than man; join me, Sophronimus, in mutual acknowledgments; 'tis he, 'tis Socrates who marries us at his own expense, and gives us best part of his own fortune to support us: but we must not suffer him, we must not be rich on these conditions; no, if our hearts have any gratitude, let them imitate his generosity.

Sophronimus.—O Socrates, with her I throw myself at thy feet; like her I am charmed, astonished and confounded at thy goodness; we will not, must not abuse it; look on us as your children, but do not let those children be a burden to their kind parent; thy friendship is fortune sufficient, 'tis all that we desire; you are not rich, and yet you do more than all the great ones of the earth; but were we to accept thy bounties, we should be unworthy of them.

Socrates.—Rise, my children, you affect me too deeply: are we not bound to respect the will of the dead? did not your father, Aglae, whom I always considered as part of myself, did he not enjoin me to treat you as my daughter? Had I not done so, I had betrayed the confidence of friendship: I took upon me the performance of his will, and I have executed it: the little I bestow on you would have been useless to my old age, which has not many wants to supply. If it was my duty to obey my friend, it is yours to obey your father. I am that father now, and by that sacred name command you not to make me unhappy by your refusal: but retire, I see Xantippe coming this way; I have reasons for desiring you to avoid her at present.

Agl.—Your commands are cruel, but they must be obeyed.

SCENE III.

Socrates, Xantippe.

Xantippe.—A fine piece of work you have made here; upon my word, my dear husband, I must put a stop to your proceedings. Here had I promised Aglae to Anitus, the high priest, a man of interest among the great, and Sophronimus to the rich Drixa, who has extensive influence in the whole nation; and you marry your two fools together and make me break my word to both; not content with this, you must needs give them best part of your fortune, too. Twenty thousand drachms! good gods! twenty thousand drachms! Are you not ashamed of yourself? at the age of threescore and ten, too? Who's to pay your physicians when you are sick? or your lawyers when you have a lawsuit? What am I to do when that

villainous, wry-necked fellow, Anitus, whom you might have had on your side, if he should join his party to persecute you, as they have done so often already? Confusion to all philosophy and philosophers, I say, and to my own foolish regard for you! You pretend to direct others, and want leading-strings yourself; always reasoning without a grain of common sense. If you were not one of the best men in the world, you would be the most ridiculous and the most insupportable: but, mind me, you have only one way left, break off this foolish match, and do what your wife bids you.

Socrates.—You talk well, my dear Xantippe, and with great moderation; but hear what I have to say in return. I did not propose this marriage myself, but Aglae and Sophronimus love and are worthy of each other. I have already made over everything to you that the laws will allow me, and have given almost all that remained to the daughter of my friend: the little which I keep is enough for me. I have no physician to pay because I live sober; no lawyers because I have neither debts nor reversions: and with regard to that philosphy you reproach me with, it will teach me to bear the malice of Anitus and your treatment of me; nay, even to love you, in spite of your ill-humor. (Exit.)

SCENE IV.

Xantippe.—(Alone.) The old fool! and yet, spite of myself, I can't help esteeming him; for, after all, there is something great even in his follies: but his coolness and indifference make me mad. To scold him is but lost labor: for these thirty years past I have been perpetually pecking at him; and when I have tired myself with it, he bids me go on, and I am dumbfounded. Surely there must be something in that soul of his superior to mine.

SCENE V.

Xantippe, Drixa.

Drixa.—So, Madame Xantippe, I see you are mistress at home: fie! fie! how mean it is to be governed by a husband!

this vile Socrates, to prevent my making a young fellow's fortune; but I'll be revenged.

Xantippe.—My dear Madame Drixa, don't be so angry with my husband, I am angry enough with him myself: he's a poor, weak man, I confess; but I verily believe has one of the best hearts in the world; has not the least degree of malice, and does a thousand foolish things without designing, and with so much honesty, that one can't help forgiving him: then, indeed, he is as obstinate as a mule: I have done nothing but tease and torment him my whole life; nay, I have even beat him sometimes, and yet I have never been able to mend him, nay, not so much as to put him into a passion. What can I do with him?

Dri.—I tell you, I'll be revenged; under yonder portico I perceive his good friend Anitus, and some more of our party: let me alone with him.

Xan.—My god! I am dreadfully afraid these folks, all together, will do my poor husband some mischief: I must go and tell him of it, for, after all, one can't help loving him.

SCENE VI.

Anitus, Drixa, Terpander, Acros.

Drixa.—Most noble Anitus, we have all been wronged: you are tricked as well as myself: this vile Socrates has given away three parts of his fortune on purpose to spite you: you must take ample revenge of him.

Anitus.—I design it: heaven itself requires it of me: this man treats me with contempt, and, of course, must despise the gods. Already we have had several accusations against him, we must repeat them, you will all assist me: we will put him in danger of his life, then will I offer him my protection, on condition that he resigns Aglae to me, and to you the beautiful Sophronimus: thus we shall all gain our several points: he will be sufficiently punished by the fright we shall put him into: I shall get my mistress, and you your lover.

Dri.—Wisdom herself speaks in Anitus: sure some divinity inspires you: but tell us, how are we to proceed?

Ani.—This is about the time when the judges go to the tribunal, with Melitus at the head of them.

Dri.—That Melitus is a little pedant, a sad fellow, and your enemy.

Ani.—He is so; but he is still a greater enemy to Socrates; 'tis a rascally hypocrite who supports the rights of the Areopagus against me: but we always hold together when our mutual interest and business is to destroy these pretended wise men, who want to open the eyes of people to our conduct: hearken, my dear Drixa, you are a devotee.

Dri.—Certainly, my lord, I love money, and I love pleasure with all my soul, but in matters of devotion I yield to none.

Ani.—Go, then, immediately, and get together as many bawling enthusiasts as you can, and cry out, impiety! impiety!

Terpander.—Is there anything to be got by it? If there is, we are all ready.

Acros.—Ay, ay, that we are; but what sort of impiety?

Ani.—O every kind: however, we had best accuse him at once of not believing in the gods; that's the shortest way.

Dri.—O let me alone, then.

Ani.—You shall be well supported; go, and stir up your friends under the portico: I'll inform, meantime, some of my news-loving friends of it, who come frequently to dine with me, a parcel of contemptible fellows they are, to be sure, but such as, if properly directed, can do a good deal of mischief on occasion: we must make use of every expedient to promote a good cause: away, my friends, recommend yourselves to Ceres, and be ready to cry out when I give you the signal: 'tis the only way for you to live happy here and gain heaven hereafter.

SCENE VII.

Anitus, Graphius, Chomus, Bertillus.

Anitus.—Most indefatigable Graphius, profound Chomus, and delicate Bertillus, have you finished those little works as I commanded you against the impious Socrates?

Graphius.—My lord, I have labored: he'll never hold up his head again.

Chomus.—I have proved the fact against him; struck him dumb.

Bertillus.—I have only mentioned him in my journal, and it has done for him.

Ani.—Graphius, beware, you know I forbade your prolixity: you are naturally tedious, and that may wear out the patience of the court.

Gra.—My lord, 'tis all in one leaf: wherein I have proved that the soul is an infused quintessence; that tails were given to animals to drive away flies; that Ceres works miracles; and, consequently, that Socrates is an enemy to the state and ought to be exterminated.

Ani.—A most excellent conclusion! remember to carry your accusation to the second judge, who is a complete philosopher. I'll answer for it, you'll soon get rid of your enemy Socrates.

Gra.—My lord, I am not his enemy: I am only vexed that he has so great a reputation: all that I do is for the glory of Ceres and the good of my country.

Ani.—Well, well, make haste and be gone: and you, learned Chomus, what have you done?

Cho.—My lord, finding nothing reprehensible in the writings of Socrates, I shall accuse him point-blank of thinking directly opposite to what he says, and shall show the poison he intends to spread in everything he is to say hereafter.

Ani.—Wonderful, indeed! carry your piece to the fourth judge: he has not common sense, and, therefore, will understand you perfectly: now for you, Bertillus.

Ber.—My lord, here is my last journal upon the Chaos. I have proved, by a regular series from the Chaos to the Olympics, that Socrates perverts the youth of Athens.

Ani.—Admirable! go you from me to the seventh judge, and tell him I desire he'd take care of Socrates; so; here comes Melitus already, the first of the eleven; there's no necessity of practicing any art with him, we know each other too well.

SCENE VIII.

Anitus, Melitus.

Anitus.—Mr. Judge, one word with you: this Socrates must be destroyed.

Melitus.—Indeed, Mr. High Priest, I have long thought so: let us agree in this point; we may quarrel, you know, notwithstanding, about everything else.

Ani.—I know we hate each other most cordially: but at the same time we may lay our heads together to govern the commonwealth.

Mel.—With all my heart, nobody can overhear us: therefore, to speak freely, I know you are a rogue, and you don't look upon me as a very honest man: I can't hurt you, because you are high priest, nor you me, because I am first judge; but Socrates may do us both a mischief, by exposing us to the world; our first business, therefore, is to destroy him, and then we may be at leisure to fall upon each other the first opportunity.

Ani.—(Aside.) 'Tis well observed: how I could rejoice now to see this rascally judge upon an altar, his arms hanging on one side and his legs on the other, whilst I with my golden knife was ripping up his guts and consulting his liver at leisure.

Mel.—(Aside.) Shall I never be able to send this villainous high priest to jail, and make him swallow a pint of hemlock by my command?

Ani.—O my friend, here come our noble assistants. I have taken care to prepare the populace.

Mel.—Very well, my dear friend, you may depend upon me in this affair, not forgetting old scores.

SCENE IX.

Anitus, Melitus, some of the Judges of Athens passing along under the portico. (Anitus whispers Melitus.)

Drixa, Terpander and Acros, together.—Justice, justice, scandal, impiety, justice, justice, irreligion, impiety, justice!

Anitus.—What's the matter, my friends, what's your complaint?

Dri., Ter. and Acr.—Justice! in the name of the people.

Melitus.—Against whom?

Dri., Ter. and Acr.—Against Socrates.

Mel.—Ha! ha! against Socrates? that fellow has been often accused: what has he done now?

Acr.—I don't know what.

Ter.—They say he gives money to young girls in marriage.

Acr.—Ay, he corrupts our youth.

Dri.—O he's a wicked wretch: he has offered up no cakes to Ceres; he says there is a great deal of useless gold and silver in the temple.

Acr.—Ay, and he says the priests of Ceres get drunk sometimes; that's true; he's a wicked wretch, indeed.

Dri.—He's a heretic; he denies the plurality of gods; he's a deist: he believes only in one God; he's an atheist.

All three together.—Yes, he's a heretic, a deist and an atheist.

Mel.—Dreadful accusations, indeed, and all extremely probable: I have heard as much before.

Ani.—The state is in danger if we leave such crimes unpunished: Minerva will withdraw her protection from us.

Dri.—Ay, that she will; I have heard him laugh at Minerva's owl.

Mel.—At Minerva's owl! O heaven! gentlemen, is not it your opinion he ought to be sent to prison immediately?

The Judges.—(All together.) To prison with him, to prison.

Mel.—Guards, carry Socrates to prison this instant.

Dri.—And afterward let him be burned without a hearing.

One of the Judges.—No, no; we must hear him; we must not go against the law.

Ani.—No, no; that's what the good woman meant: we must hear him, but not let what he says have too much effect on us; you know these philosophers are devilish subtle: 'tis they

who have disturbed all those nations which we have endeavored to render peaceable and quiet.

Mel.—To prison with him, to prison.

SCENE X.

Xantippe, Sophronimus, Aglae, Socrates, in chains. (Entering.)

Xantippe.—O mercy, mercy, my poor husband is going to prison; aren't you ashamed, Mr. Judges, to treat a man of his years in this manner? What harm could he do? Alas! it is not in his power, he is more fool than knave, God knows; have pity on him, good gentlemen. O my dear, I told you you would draw yourself into some bad affair. This comes of portioning young girls. What an unhappy creature I am!

Sophronimus.—O my lords, respect his age, respect his virtue; give me his chains! I am ready to yield up my liberty, my life, for his.

Aglae.—Yes; we will go to prison in his stead; we will die for him: do not destroy the noblest, best of men: take us, rather, for your victims.

Melitus.—You see how he corrupts our youth.

Socrates.—No more, my wife, no more, my children; do not oppose the will of heaven, which speaks by the laws: he who resists the law is no longer a citizen. God wills that I should be put in bondage; I submit to his divine decree without murmur or repining. In my own house, in Athens, or in a prison, I am equally free; and whilst I behold in you so much gratitude, and so much friendship, I am happy. What matters it whether Socrates sleeps in his own chamber or in a prison? Everything is as the supreme will ordains, and my will should submit to it.

Mel.—Take away this reasoner.

Anitus.—Gentlemen, what he says I must own has affected me; the man seems to have a good disposition; I flatter myself I should be able to convert him; let me have a little private conversation with him; please to order his wife and these young folks to retire.

One of the Judges.—Most venerable Anitus, you have our consent to parley with him before he appears at the tribunal.

SCENE XI.

Anitus, Socrates.

Anitus.—Most virtuous Socrates, my heart bleeds to see you in this condition.

Socrates.—And have you a heart?

Ani.—I have, and one that feels for you: I am ready to do everything for you.

Soc.—I think you have done enough already.

Ani.—Hark ye, Socrates, your situation is worse than you think it is; let me tell you, your life is in danger.

Soc.—That is of very little consequence.

Ani.—To your noble soul it may appear so, but it is otherwise in the eyes of all those who, like me, admire your virtue: believe me, however you may be armed by philosophy, it is dreadful to die a death of ignominy: but that is not all; your reputation, which should be dear to you, will be sullied in after ages: the religious of both sexes will laugh at your fall, and insult you: if you are burned, they'll light the pile; if you're strangled, they'll tie the cord; if you're poisoned, they'll pound the hemlock; and not only that, but they'll make your memory execrable to all posterity. Now it is in your own power to prevent all this: I will promise not only to save your life, but even to persuade your judges to say with the oracle that you are the wisest of men: you have nothing to do but to give me up your young pupil, Aglae, with the portion; you understand me: as to her marriage with Sophronimus, we shall find means to set it aside: thus you will enjoy a peaceful and honorable old age, and the gods and goddesses will bless you.

Soc.—Soldiers, conduct me to prison immediately. (He is carried off.)

Ani.—This fellow is incorrigible; but it's not my fault; I have done my duty, and have nothing to reproach myself with: he must be abandoned as a reprobate, and left to die in his sins.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Judges seated on the Tribunal, Socrates below.

Judge.—(To Anitus.) You should not sit here, you are priest of Ceres.

Anitus.—I am only here for edification.

Melitus.—Silence there: Socrates, you are accused of being a bad citizen, of corrupting youth, of denying a plurality of gods, of being a heretic, deist and atheist: answer to the charge.

Socrates.—Judges of Athens, I exhort you all to be as good citizens as I have always myself endeavored to be: to shed your blood for your country, as I have done in many a battle: with regard to youth, guide them by your counsels, and, above all, direct them by your example; teach them to love true virtue, and to avoid the miserable philosophy of the schools: the article concerning a plurality of gods is a little more difficult to discuss, but hear what I have to say upon it. Know, then, ye judges of Athens, there is but one God.

Melitus and another Judge.—O the impious wretch!

Soc.—I say, there is but one God, in his nature infinite, nor can any being partake of his infinity. Turn your eyes toward the celestial globes, to the earth and seas; all correspond together, all are made one for the other: each being is intimately connected with other beings, all formed with one design, by one great architect, one sole master and preserver: perhaps he hath deigned to create genii and demons more powerful and more wise than men; if such exist, they are creatures like you, his first subjects, not gods: but nothing in nature proves to us that they do exist, whilst all nature speaks one God and one father: this God hath no need of Mercury and Iris to deliver his commands to us: he hath only to will, and that is enough. If by Minerva you understand no more than the wisdom of God; if by Neptune you only mean his immutable laws, which raise or depress the sea, you may still reverence Neptune and Minerva, provided that under these emblems you adore none but the supreme being, and that the people are not deceived by you into false opinions. Be careful,

above all, not to turn religion into metaphysics, its essence is morality: dispute not, but worship. If our ancestors believed that the supreme God came down into the arms of Alcmene, Danae and Semele, and had children by them, our ancestors imagined dangerous and idle fables. 'Tis an insult on the divinity to conceive that he could possibly, in any manner whatsoever, commit with woman the crime which we call adultery. It is a discouragement to the rest of mankind to say that, to be a great man it is necessary to be produced from the mysterious union of Jupiter and one of our own wives and daughters. Miltiades, Cimon, Themistocles and Aristides, whom you persecuted, were perhaps much greater than Perseus, Hercules or Bacchus. The only way to become the children of God is to endeavor to please him. Deserve, therefore, that title by never passing an unjust sentence.

Mel.—What insolence! what blasphemy!

Another Judge.—What absurdities! one can't tell what he means.

Mel.—Socrates, you are always too fond of argument: answer briefly, and with precision: did you, or did you not, laugh at Minerva's owl?

Soc.—Judges of Athens, take care of your owls; when you propose ridiculous things as objects of belief, too many are apt to resolve that they will believe nothing: they have sense enough to find out that your doctrine is absurd, though they have not elevation of mind sufficient to discover the law of truth; they know how to laugh at your little deceits, but not to adore the first of beings, the one incomprehensible, incommunicable being, the eternal, all-just and all-powerful God.

Mel.—O the blasphemer! the monster! he has said too much already: I condemn him to death.

Many of the Judges.—And so do we.

One of the Judges.—Several of us are of another opinion; Socrates has spoken wisely; we believe men would be more wise and just if they thought like him: for my part, far from condemning him, I think he ought to be rewarded.

Many of the Judges.—We think so, too.

Mel.—The opinions seem to be divided.

Ani.—Gentlemen of the Areopagus, permit me to interrogate him a little. Do you believe, Socrates, that the sun turns round, and that the Areopagus acts by divine right?

Soc.—You have no authority to ask any questions, but I have authority to teach you what you are ignorant of: it is of little importance to society whether the sun or the earth turns round, but it is of the utmost consequence whether the men who turn with them be just or unjust: virtue only acts from the right divine, and you and the Areopagus have no rights but those which your country has bestowed on you.

Ani.—Illustrious and most equitable judges, let Socrates retire. (Helitus makes a sign, Socrates is carried out.)

Ani.—(Proceeds.) Most august Areopagus, instituted by heaven, you hear what he says: this dangerous fellow denies that the sun turns round, and that you act by right divine: if these opinions prevail, adieu to magistracy, and adieu to the sun· you are no longer judges appointed by Minerva; you will become accountable for your proceedings; you must no longer determine but according to the laws; and if you once depend on the laws you are undone: punish rebellion, therefore, revenge earth and heaven: I am going: dread you the anger of the gods if Socrates is permitted to live. (Anitus goes out and the judges demur.)

One of the Judges.—I don't care to quarrel with Anitus; he is a dangerous man to offend. If he troubled himself with the gods only it would not signify.

Another Judge.—(To his brother sitting near him.) Between you and me, Socrates is in the right; but then he should not be in the right so publicly. I care no more for Ceres and Neptune than he does; but he should not speak out to the whole Areopagus what he ought to have whispered: yet, after all, what is there in poisoning a philosopher, especially when he is old and ugly?

Another Judge.—If there be any injustice in condemning Socrates, it is Anitus' business and not mine: I lay it all upon his conscience: besides, it grows late, we lose our time; let us talk no more about it: to death with him.

Another.—Ay, ay, they say he's a heretic and an atheist; to death with him.

Mel.—Call Socrates. (He is brought in.) Blessed be the gods, the plurality of voices is for death; Socrates, the gods by us condemn you to drink hemlock.

Soc.—We are all mortal: nature condemns you also to death in a short time, probably you may meet with a more unhappy end than mine: the distempers which bring on death are much more painful than a cup of hemlock. I thank those among my judges who pleaded in favor of innocence; for the rest, they have my pity.

One of the Judges.—(Going out.) Certainly this man deserved a pension from the state, rather than a cup of poison.

Another Judge.—I think so, too; but why would he quarrel with a priest of Ceres?

Another.—After all, it is best to get rid of a philosopher: those fellows have always a certain fierceness of spirit which should be damped a little.

Another.—One word with you, gentlemen: would not it be right, whilst our hand is in, to make an end of all the geometricians, who pretend that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones? They are a mighty scandal to the foolish people that read their works.

Another.—Ay, ay, we'll hang them all the next session; let's go to dinner.

SCENE II.

Socrates.—(Alone.) I have been long prepared for death; all I fear at present is that my wife, Xantippe, will be troubling me in my last moments, and interrupt me in the sweet employment of recollecting my soul and preparing myself for eternity: I ought to busy myself only in the contemplation of that supreme being, before whom I am soon to appear: but here she comes; I must be resigned to all things.

SCENE III.

Socrates, Xantippe, with the Disciples of Socrates.

Xantippe.—Well, my poor man, what have these gentlemen of the law concluded? Have they fined you, are you banished

or acquitted? My God! how uneasy have I been about you! pray take care this don't happen a second time.

Socrates.—No, my dear, this will not happen a second time. I'll answer for it; give yourself no uneasiness about anything. My dear disciples, my friends, welcome.

Crito.—(At the head of his disciples.) You see us, beloved Socrates, no less concerned for you than Xantippe; we have gained permission of the judges to visit you; just heaven! must we behold Socrates in chains! permit us to kiss those bonds which reflect shame on Athens. How could Anitus and his friends reduce you to this condition?

Soc.—Let us think no more of these trifles, my friends, but continue the examination we were making yesterday into the soul's immortality. We observed, I remember, that nothing could be more probable, or at the same time more full of comfort and satisfaction, than this sweet idea; in fact, matter, we know, changes, but perishes not; why, then, should the soul perish? Can it be that, raised as we are to a knowledge of a God through the veil of this mortal body, we should cease to know him when that veil is removed? No, as we think now we must always think; thought is the very essence of man; and this being must appear before a just God, who will recompense virtue, punish vice and pardon weakness and error.

Xan.—Nobly said; but what does this fellow here with his cup? (Enter the jailer, or executioner of the eleven, carrying a cup of hemlock.)

Jailer.—Here, Socrates, the senate have sent you this.

Xan.—Thou vile poisoner of the commonwealth, would you kill my husband before my face? Monster, I'll tear you to pieces.

Soc.—My dear friend, I ask your pardon for my wife's rude behavior: she has scolded me all her life; she only treats you as she does her husband; excuse her impertinence: give me the cup. (He takes the cup.)

One of the Disciples.—O divine Socrates! why may not we take that poison for you? Horrible injustice! shall the guilty thus condemn the innocent, and fools destroy the wise? you go then to death?

Soc.—No, my friends, to life: this is the cup of immortality: it is not this perishable body that has loved and instructed you; it is my soul alone that has lived with you, and that shall love you forever. (He is going to drink.)

Jailer.—I must take off your fetters first; 'tis always done.

Soc.—Do it, then, I beg you. (He scratches his leg.)

One of the Disciples.—You smile!

Soc.—I smile at the reflection that pleasure should arise from pain: thus it is that eternal felicity shall spring from the miseries of this life. (Drinks the poison.)

Cri.—Alas! what have you done?

Xan.—Ay, for a thousand ridiculous discourses of this kind the poor man has lost his life: indeed, my dear, you will break my heart; I could strangle all the judges with my own hands. I did use to scold you, indeed, but I always loved you notwithstanding; these polite, well-bred gentlemen have put you to death: O my dear, dear husband.

Soc.—Be calm, my good Xantippe; weep not, my friends; it becomes not the disciples of Socrates to shed tears.

Cri.—How can we avoid it on so dreadful an occasion? this legal murder!

Soc.—Thus it is that men will often behave to the worshippers of one true God, and the enemies of superstition.

Cri.—And must Socrates be one of those unhappy victims?

Soc.—'Tis noble to be the victim of the deity: I die contented. I wish, indeed, that, to the satisfaction of seeing you, my friends, I could have added the happiness of embracing Sophronimus and Aglae: I wonder they are not here: they would have made my last moments more welcome.

Cri.—Alas! they know not that you have already undergone the judges' dreadful sentence: they have been talking to the people, and praising those magistrates who would have acquitted you. Aglae has laid open the guilt of Anitus, and published his shame and dishonor: they perhaps might have saved your life: O dear Socrates, why would you thus precipitate your fate?

SCENE THE LAST.

Aglae, Sophronimus.

Aglae.—(Entering.) Divine Socrates, be not afraid: be comforted, Xantippe: worthy disciples of Socrates, do not weep.

Sophronimus.—Your enemies are confounded: the people rise in your defence.

Agl.—We have been talking to them; we have laid open the intrigues and jealousy of the wicked Anitus: it was my duty to demand justice for his crime, as I was the cause of it.

Soph.—Anitus hath saved himself by flight from the rage of the people: he and his accomplices are pursued: solemn thanks have been given to those judges who appeared in your favor: the people are now at the gates of the prison, and wait to conduct you home in triumph.

Xantippe.—Alas! 'tis lost labor!

One of the Disciples.—O Socrates, why would you so hastily obey?

Agl.—Live, dear Socrates, the benefactor of your country, the model of future ages; O live for the general happiness of mankind!

Crito.—Ye noble pair, my virtuous friends, it is too late.

Xan.—You stayed too long.

Agl.—Alas! too late? what mean you? just heaven!

Soph.—Has he, then, already drunk the fatal draught?

Socrates.—Sweet Aglae and dear Sophronimus, the law ordained that I should take the poison: I obeyed the law, unjust as it is, because it oppressed myself alone: had the injustice been done to another, I would have resisted it. I go to death, but the example of friendship which you give the world, and your noble soul shall never perish: your virtue is greater, much greater, than the guilt of those who accused me. I bless that fate which the world may call misfortune, because it hath set in the fairest light the goodness of your hearts. My dear Xantippe, be happy; and remember, that to be so you must curb your impetuous temper. My beloved disciples, listen

always to the voice of that philosophy which will teach you to despise your persecutors and pity human weakness: and you, my daughter Aglae, and my son Sophronimus, be always what you now are.

Agl.—How wretched are we that we cannot die for you!

Soc.—Your lives are valuable, mine would have been useless: take my tender last farewell; the doors of eternity are opened to receive me.

Xan.—He was a great man! O I will rouse up the whole nation.

Soph.—May we raise up temples to Socrates, if ever mortal man deserved it!

Cri.—At least may his wisdom teach mankind that temples should be raised to God alone!

WOMAN'S CRAZE FOR TITLES

(LES BOURGEOISES DE QUALITÉ)

OF

F. C. DANCOURT.

(*Translated by W. H. H. Chambers.*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M. NAQUART, Attorney.
M. BLANDINEAU, Lawyer.
THE COUNT.
THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER
THE VILLAGE CLERK.
MADAME BLANDINEAU,
MADAME RECORDER, } *Sisters.*
MADAME DEPUTY,
MADAME CARMIN.
ANGÉLIQUE, who loves the Count.
LISETTE, Maid.
CLAUDINE, Maid.
LOLIVE, the Count's Valet.
CASCARET, Lackey.

SCENE—A SMALL VILLAGE IN FRANCE

ARGUMENT.

M. Naquart, a Parisian attorney, had fallen in love, early in life, with a girl who refused him to become Madame Recorder—wife of a small official. She is now an oldish widow, rusticating in a small country village with her sister, Madame Blandineau. M. Naquart comes out to visit his old friend and associate, M. Blandineau, and asks this brother-in-law to propose him to the widow in marriage. Madame Recorder, however, frequents fortune-tellers and astrologers and has been promised the immediate fulfilment of her heart's desire, a titled husband; consequently she spurns M. Naquart, who, though rich, is untitled. Besides, she informs them, she intends that very evening to marry a count, whom she has charmed away from her niece, Angélique. She offers to give this niece to M. Naquart. Angélique learns of the impending marriage, meets the count at the entrance of the village, upbraids him and threatens to marry M. Naquart. The count confesses he is penniless, and as Angélique has no means, he is marrying the widow, who cannot live much longer, he says, solely for her money, which he will share with

Angélique. She spurns the proposition, and he finally swears he will marry no one but Angélique. Meanwhile Madame Blandineau and Madame Deputy, two sisters of Madame Recorder, have discovered that she is to become a countess. Jealous rage makes each threaten to leave her husband unless he in some way procures a title. Their fury increases upon the arrival of a woman, a friend, who has grown rich selling yarn, and has just bought an office for her husband that entitles her to be called president. By a bold device of the attorney and the connivance of the village clerk, Madame Recorder is married to M. Naquart; the count gets Angélique, but allows Madame Naquart to retain the title of countess, while Madame Blandineau becomes Baroness Limpwaddle.

ACT I.

Enter M. Naquart and the Village Clerk.

Naquart.—Now, Clerk, I assure you there will not be the slightest difficulty about it, and as all her family perfectly agree with me, this little subterfuge is merely a trifle.

Clerk.—Very well, as you say. Since you wish it so, I'm willing. You're a Parisian lawyer, I simply a village clerk. Your office is higher, your income larger than mine, and surely it would be impertinence should I seem to require of myself a conscience more scrupulous than yours.

Naq.—Conscience doesn't enter into this matter at all; and between men of the same profession—officials——

Clerk.—That's true, you're right. No one can put into a matter something he never possessed—but it's an ill wind that blows no one good, and it's all the same to me. Provided I'm well paid, and you manage the whole affair and take all the consequences, I've not another word to say.

Naq.—I assume full responsibility for the event and whatever follows.

Clerk.—Very well, agreed; the bargain's struck. I'll go and await your coming. But here's M. Blandineau, who, I think, wishes to speak with you.

Enter M. Blandineau.

Blandineau.—Ah! you are here engaged in some deep conspiracy with our clerk? I trust I do not interrupt?

Naquart.—Not in the slightest: you promised to consent to this marriage, and——

Blan.—Yes, I give it freely and fully; but I cannot promise that my consent will induce my sister-in-law to marry you. She is, as you are aware, very frivolous and giddy; in fact, I am astonished that her many follies have not destroyed any desire you may have had to marry her.

Naq.—I have sworn, M. Blandineau, to make at least one woman a rational creature, and the more giddy and foolish she is when I take her, the more honor shall I merit for the finished product.

Blan.—And the more difficult—nay—impossible, will be your task. My wife is far from being so silly as her sister, yet all my attempts to regulate her mind and manners have, up to this very moment, proved futile. To avoid our daily altercations I shall shortly be reduced, I think, to acting the fool with her, since there seems to be no method of inducing her to act rationally with me.

Naq.—Could you do better? You have plenty of money and no children. Your wife likes to spend freely and loves luxurious display—that's her greatest folly: well, let her show off; for, after all, money is made to use.

Blan.—True; but it would be ridiculous for a plain lawyer like myself——

Naq.—Lawyer or not, when you've made a lot of money enjoy it; 'twould be ridiculous to do otherwise.

Blan.—But formerly, M. Naquart——

Naq.—Formerly, M. Blandineau, people lived according to the customs of former times; let us to-day live according to

the customs of our day and generation; and since by money we live, why not live according to our money?

Blan.—I am opposed to the superfluous, am entirely content with the necessary, and know nothing more charming than the simplicity of the good old days.

Naq.—But if, as in the good old days, you were paid three or four cents (sous) for preparing legal documents which now pay you more than twice as many dollars (pistoles), would this charming simplicity please you so well, M. Blandineau?

Blan.—Oh! not at all, I confess, not at all. It's not our receipts I wish to simplify, but our expenses.

Naq.—We must regulate one by the other, M. Blandineau. With the single exception of her foolish vanity your wife has excellent traits; in fact, her absurdities are wholly the product of your imagination, and the more you try to correct them, the more real they become; while should you attempt to constrain her, you would but win her hatred. Believe me, it is better for both you and your wife that you conform yourself to her fantasies than try to make her submit to yours.

Blan.—That may be your opinion, but it's not mine. How delighted I shall be to see you the husband of my sister-in-law, Madame Recorder. We shall see if you then reason so coolly.

Naq.—You shall have that pleasure, and since you approve my marriage, I shall employ methods to bring it about which otherwise I should not use.

Blan.—And what methods do you propose?

Naq.—I'll tell you: my idea is, first, for you to see if she is inclined to accept me, then we'll regulate our plans according to her answer.

Blan.—I'll not say good-bye, as we shall meet so soon again—nor shall I delay your answer.

Enter Madame Recorder and Lisette.

Madame Recorder.—I cannot rid my mind, Lisette, of these disturbing omens; this will be, I know, an unlucky day for me. I sneezed three times before breakfast; my complexion

is cloudy; my eye misty, nor could I, this morning, give the proper twist to my left-hand curl.

Blandineau.—Ah! you're here, sister, I was just going up to call on you.

Mad. R.—To call on me, brother, and for what purpose? You know I'm not fond of family visits.

Blan.—But this must have been pleasing, since my object is to marry you, sister.

Mad. R.—To marry me, brother, to marry me? Well! this is truly amusing. And who, pray, is the husband-to-be? At least you must tell me his name.

Blan.—A very wealthy old bachelor, M. Naquart, a court attorney.

Mad. R.—An old bachelor for me? An attorney, too, Lisette! M. Naquart! Then I should be Mad. Naquart, should I? a sweet name that, Mad. Naquart! And a pretty fellow, I find this M. Naquart, to think for one moment that I would marry him!

Lisette.—Really, Madame, such insolence merits severe punishment.

Blan.—Pshaw! who are you, anyway, if you please? daughter of the bailiff that was the father of my wife; sister-in-law to me, an ordinary plain lawyer; widow of a scribbling recorder, who literally died of chagrin at your behavior. You're a very fine personage indeed, Madame Recorder!

Mad. R.—Recorder, Monsieur? I beg you, drop the name. My late husband is dead and buried, his business sold and I have no longer rank or title. The petty title of Recorder was but a stepping-stone, and, without egotism, I believe that destiny has in store for me distinctions that will no longer permit such familiarity on your part.

Blan.—More probably you are destined to become wholly a fool, if you go on in this style. Now listen, Madame, you have an opportunity to marry a wealthy and an honest man; if you do not accept him you may rest assured that I am done with you.

Mad. R.—And you may, also, rest assured that when I am a Countess and you still the plain ordinary lawyer, our acquaintance will be of the slightest.

Blan.—What! a Countess! come, don't be a fool.

Mad. R.—I shall start there; it's good enough for a beginning, but I shall rise; and from husband to husband, from dowager to dowager I will make my way, I warrant you; and as quickly as possible, too.

Blan.—(Aside.) We'll have to keep her under lock and key yet.

Mad. R.—(At the rear of the stage.) Hello, there! hello! my lackeys; large lackeys, small lackeys and medium lackeys —carry my train—come forward, coachman. Step in, Madame—After you, Madame—Ah! no, Madame, it is my carriage—Your hand, please, Chevalier. Sit there, my dear Count. Drive on, coachman. 'Tis a fine thing, a carriage! Fine to have one's own carriage! (She leaves).

Blan.—And that's a carriage that will take her to the madhouse. She seems to have lost all the wit she ever had, Lisette, and I must rid my home one way or another of her presence as quickly as possible, so that my wife may not have so ridiculous an example to follow.

Lis.—You have nothing to fear on that score, Monsieur. Your wife is too sensible: she does not take after her family.

Blan.—My wife is sensible?

Lis.—Assuredly; and you should take it kindly of her, for she has, I assure you, every talent needed to make her as foolish as another.

Blan.—Yes, I've every reason, by all the infernal powers, to know she has them; that's the worst of it.

Enter Madame Blandineau.

Lisette.—(Low.) Hush, be quiet, Monsieur, here she is; do not stir her up.

Mad. B.—And, pray, what do you find to amuse you, Mademoiselle Lisette? I've been wanting you for an hour. Come, quickly, my cloak.

Lis.—Which one, Madame?

Mad. B.—The latest, of course. (Lisette leaves.) Ah! you're here, are you, Monsieur Blandineau; I'm very glad of that, for, as I'm entirely out of money, you can give me some.

Blandineau.—Give you money, Madame? Why, but yesterday you had twenty-five louis.

Mad. B.—True enough, Monsieur; but I have played, I have lost and I have paid—nothing remains. I am about to play again, and I need money in case of loss.

Blan.—Really, wife——

Mad. B.—For shame! Monsieur Blandineau, your manner implies reproach when you ought to thank me for taking your money.

Blan.—Thank you?

Mad. B.—Yes, thank me. 'Tis only badly acquired wealth from which no profit can be wrung: I lose your money constantly.

Blan.—Then why do you play, Madame?

Mad. B.—Why do I play, Monsieur? why do I play? A pretty question! What would you have me do, and above all, in the country? I was soft enough to accompany you and your tiresome relatives to this miserable, out-of-the-way hole. Now, it so happens, that in the village there are some people accustomed to good society. We meet to pass the time agreeably, play being the very soul of our parties: and I shall not play! No, Monsieur, you need not count on such an absurdity; and, if you please, give me some money; otherwise I shall borrow it in your name.

Blan.—Very well, Madame, here's ten louis more; if you lose them——

Mad. B.—If I don't lose, I shall spend them, so you need not concern yourself about the matter further. By the way, to-day is the village fête; we, the persons of most importance, will dine them here; but you, I believe, are fully aware of this fact——

Blan.—What! notwithstanding all I have said, you still persist in that ridiculous project?

Mad. B.—It was your talk and remonstrances, Monsieur, which finally determined me to give it.

Blan.—Madame Blandineau, you will force me to take extreme measures——

Mad. B.—Monsieur Blandineau, you will make me do things——

Blan.—I defy you to do worse.

Mad. B.—Ah! indeed! Monsieur; am I a flirt? or a libertine?

Blan.—Worse than that, Madame! what utter folly to bring together here eight or ten women, each more ridiculous than the other, not one a true friend, to drink and eat up our good money!

Mad. B.—My! but you have a sordid soul, Monsieur Blandineau! A sordid soul, I say; and little too you know how to make the most of your position. I believe in putting my best foot forward; that's my weakness.

Blan.—One with as little sense as you display ought to hide from the world.

Mad. B.—You see, Monsieur, the results of your attempted interference with the dinner. Very well, now we shall have music, some violins, a little concert, followed by a ball, and if you continue, even an operetta.

Blan.—What senseless luxury! Were you the wife of a public contractor, you would scarcely dare to be more extravagant.

Mad. B.—'Tis our sister who pays the bill, so you need not worry.

Blan.—The foolish woman!

Enter Lisette.

Lisette.—Here is your cloak, Madame.

Madame Blandineau.—(To M. Blandineau.) Good-bye, my dear. (To Lisette.) Call Cascaret, that he may carry my train. (Lisette leaves.)

Blan.—Your train, Madame Blandieau? Do I understand that you want to have a train carried?

Mad. B.—Yes, Monsieur Blandineau; you understand me correctly. My train shall be carried in public, so that I may not appear like one of the common herd.

Enter Lisette, followed by Cascaret.

Blandineau.—But my wife——

Madame Blandineau.—No further buts nor disputes, husband. Let there be candles a-plenty, Lisette, and above all, well laid covers.

Lisette.—Yes, Madame.

Mad. B.—Jasmin and Cascaret shall rinse the glasses, the god-son and cousin of Monsieur shall pour the wine and his chief clerk serve them at table.

Blan.—My chief clerk? He'll do nothing of the sort.

Mad. B.—Oh! yes, he will, my dear, I've already asked him; he is not nearly so impolite as you; nor would he dare to oppose me.

Blan.—But, Madame Blandineau, think——

Mad. B.—Don't put yourself out at all, my dear; if the company does not please you we can easily dispense with your society.

Blan.—Oh! by gad! I'll be there, I warrant you—and you shall see——(Mad. Blandineau leaves, Cascaret carrying her train.)

Lis.—She's a masterful woman, Monsieur, a brilliant manager. To make a butler of a chief clerk is clever, to say the least.

Blan.—I'm sure he will not do such a foolish thing.

Lis.—He'll do it, Monsieur. He and Madame are very good friends indeed; he does all she asks.

Blan.—Don't you think, Lisette, that my wife is getting a trifle off in the upper story?

Lis.—No, Monsieur, on the contrary, I think she shows the best of sense; she takes her pleasure wherever she finds it, while you have all the trouble and chagrin. Who of the two is most foolish?

Blan.—Oh! I, without a doubt. My opinion is, however, that her sister's example is ruining her; therefore, I wish to be rid of that silly creature; if possible, without being obliged to quarrel with my wife. That is the reason I desire to marry her to M. Naquart.

Lis.—What does it matter to you whom she takes, provided only she marries. In fact, Monsieur, I suspect her of another and secret plan which she will find difficult to keep from me. Let me pry into her feelings a little and trust me to impart to you my discoveries.

Blan.—Very well, Lisette, do so quickly. I'll go to M. Naquart, and together we'll await your news.

Lis.—Go, Monsieur, you shall have it without delay, trust me for that. (M. Blandineau leaves.) (Alone.) This poor man is to be pitied—but here comes a sweet creature who is more to be pitied even than he, although her misfortune is of an entirely different nature.

Enter Angélique.

Angélique.—At leisure, Lisette, and yet you did not come to me? How cruel to leave me alone with my woes and not, when possible, to cheer me with your company.

Lisette.—I can't accommodate the whole family. All seem to want me at once: Mad. Blandineau to rail against her husband; the husband to complain to me of his wife; Madame Recorder to tell me of her fine apparel and deadly charms; and you to speak of your lover. Plenty of occupation, you see, in this household.

Ang.—What silly old aunts I have, Lisette, and how unfortunate I am to be without means or relatives other than these; and a heart filled with tender passion for such a perfidious lover.

Lis.—I cannot understand why, during the week we have been here, you have not heard from him. He must be sick or dead.

Ang.—Worse, Lisette; he is fickle. Some days before our departure, you will remember, we met together in your room; he came an hour later than usual and remained a much shorter time; he was uneasy, absent-minded and embarrassed; he was beginning to love me no longer, and absence has made him forget me altogether.

Lis.—If that be true, your aunts are the cause.

Ang.—How I hate them, Lisette!

Lis.—One was in truth only too favorably inclined to him, but she did not wish him to have the same feeling toward you.

Ang.—Yes, I fear you're right, you mean my aunt Madame Recorder, of course; I thought she loved him.

Lis.—Precisely; and that alone is sufficient to scare away a handsome fellow; then, besides, Madame Blandineau, on her own account, not wishing to see you a greater lady than herself, has done all she could to drive him away by brusque treatment. 'Twas these things, I vow, that have kept him away.

Ang.—What injustice! and how much more I love him than he ever loved me. The more they forbade me to see and speak with him, the greater the joy and delight his presence and conversation gave me, Lisette.

Lis.—That's due more to obstinacy than love.

Ang.—Oh! no, I assure you——

Lis.—Oh! yes it is, yes it is; you're a female and delight in contrariness which will often, of itself, account for more than one-half of our tender passions.

Enter Lolive.

Angélique.—Ah! dear Lisette, here comes Lolive; his master is not inconstant. How happy I am!

Lisette.—Heaven be praised! I'm delighted.

Lolive.—I'm truly fortunate, Madamoiselle, to find you before any one——

Ang.—Give me my letters, quickly.

Lo.—But I have no letters to give you, Madamoiselle.

Ang.—You have no letters for me; pray, then, what brings you here? What is your master doing?

Lo.—Doing badly, Madamoiselle; he is a traitor who merits the gallows; a dog unworthy to live.

Lis.—A fine eulogy!

Ang.—What do you mean?

Lis.—Did he send you here to tell us this?

Lo.—No; but he'll be here shortly himself to prove I'm right.

Ang.—He's coming here? For what purpose?

Lo.—To commit the greatest folly: to marry your aunt.

Ang.—To marry my aunt, Lisette!

Lis.—To marry your aunt? That cannot be done.

Lo.—Indeed it can; it's not the one who has already a husband; it's the widow, Madame Recorder. And I have here a letter for her, which I am to deliver as soon as possible.

Ang.—A letter for her. Give it to me, I must see it.

Lo.—No, Madamoiselle, you cannot see it. I've had already on account of this affair a hundred blows; and I know when I've got enough. I beg you do not let him suspect that I have even hinted of this matter. (He leaves.)

Ang.—Has my aunt become such a fool that she wishes to marry the Count?

Lis.—No, he's the fool for wanting to marry her.

Ang.—He doesn't want to, Lisette; it must be simply a pretext to be near me. He is deceiving her; my aunt loves to flatter herself. You'll see that it will turn out quite differently from what you imagine.

Lis.—She is evidently not the only one who loves to flatter herself.

Ang.—It doesn't matter; but don't you deceive me, dear Lisette. I shall go to await the Count at the entrance of the village. I wish to speak with him first and learn the truth from his own lips; nor will I leave him until he has promised to marry no one but me.

Lis.—It's a good idea to hunt him up—finding is keeping, you know.

Ang.—That's true. But come with me, won't you, please, Lisette?

Lis.—No, take a village maiden and let me meanwhile speak with your aunt. Trust me to win from her some disclosure that will not prove useless.

ACT II.

Enter Madame Recorder and the Schoolmaster.

Madame Recorder.—Be sure and give it all a sprightly turn, Monsieur Schoolmaster, a sprightly turn, remember.

Schoolmaster.—Rest easy, Madame: provided the young fellows do not want for wine, nor the girls for cakes, and that you pay me the sixty francs for the fiddlers, and the little songs I shall stick in here and there we will enliven your party in sprightly fashion, I warrant you.

Mad. R.—Well, here are three louis, Monsieur Schoolmaster; that is more than you ask.

School.—Good! so much the better! I'll furnish a trifle or two more than I agreed, and as I suspect you intend to remarry, I'll make your epi——your epi——

Mad. R.—What! my epitaph?

School.—No, by gad! quite the contrary; your epithalamium, I think it's called; I'm not sure just how it's pronounced, but the verses shall be in your praise, that's certain.

Mad. R.—Do not fail, especially, to clearly indicate the happy omens of this end of the century. They are so happy for me, that I wish to show my gratitude publicly.

School.—Oh! by gad! trust me for that. I'm at least as well satisfied as you. I've lost my wife, my wine is good and harvest bountiful, so I bid fair to be completely at my ease. Indeed, my song will be full-throated, and the girls I dance with shall shake like jelly.

Mad. R.—Well, remember it's for this evening, Schoolmaster, and these verses in my honor——

School.—Oh! they shall be finished directly. 'Tis not difficult to praise you, Madame, for you are beautiful, generous and rich.

Mad. R.—I am young, also, Monsieur Schoolmaster.

School.—Would you have that mentioned, too? Very well, I'm willing; everything counts; you'll surely tip me something for the age.

Mad. R.—Be careful not to forget it.

School.—'Tis wise. I'll date the song and 'twill serve as a baptismal certificate. Good-bye, Madame, your generous treatment has pleased me and I promise you shall be pleased with the date.

Mad. R.—Good-bye, Monsieur Schoolmaster. (The Schoolmaster leaves.) (Alone.) How delighted I am! What a charming future awaits me! Oh! happy moments, happy moments! I can scarce contain myself for joy.

Enter Lisette.

Lisette.—Really, Madame, I am told that you have filled the whole village with joy. Is it because of the fête, or have you your own particular reason for rejoicing?

Madam Recorder.—The evil omens of this morning have vanished, my dear Lisette. I have received the most agreeable news.

Lis.—'Twould be perhaps indiscreet, Madame, were I to ask you its nature?

Mad. R.—Let them blame soothsayers as much as they please; for myself, I am very well pleased with Duverger's predictions.

Lis.—Why so, Madame?

Mad. R.—Because they're coming true; they're already at my finger's end, dear Lisette.

Lis.—Pray what, Madame?

Mad. R.—The fortunate century-end and my happiness.

Lis.—But the end of the century and your happiness—what have they in common, Madame?

Mad. R.—I've had but little pleasure during this century, but my luck will change with it, and hereafter I shall have a most agreeable time.

Lis.—Fine predictions!

Mad. R.—I'm a widow to start with——

Lis.—That's promising.

Mad. R.—And I shall not remain one much longer.

Lis.—Is that so, Madame?

Mad. R.—Yes, 'tis the season of revolutions, you know, and you shall see a very pretty change in my condition.

Lis.—Ah! and this change?

Mad. R.—After to-day I shall be a woman of rank.

Lis.—A woman of rank! That doesn't surprise me, at all. Your manner shows that you are clearly intended for high life.

Mad. R.—'Tis without affectation—purely natural to me.

Lis.—And what lord is to be so fortunate as to make you a woman of rank?

Mad. R.—The little Count, my dear Lisette, the little Count.

Lis.—What! the little Count? He who loved your niece?

Mad. R.—You mean who feigned to love my niece, so that he could be near me.

Lis.—Ah! the little rascal.

Mad. R.—We worked that cleverly, didn't we?

Lis.—But why should you work any scheme? you are entirely your own mistress.

Mad. R.—Delight in mystery, my child, the charm of hoodwinking. I had even planned to elope. Oh! what a delightful experience it must be to elope.

Lis.—Yes, it has merits.

Mad. R.—We should have been married secretly—incognito—under private seal to avoid the customs of ordinary people.

Lis.—'Twas nobly planned!

Mad. R.—But the delightful pleasure of making my impertinent brother-in-law fume under our very eyes; the joy of witnessing the exasperation of my sister and niece; the satisfaction to be derived from the despair of all the women of my acquaintance, have induced us to be married here. 'Tis all very gratifying, I assure you.

Lis.—And most gracious; you're quite right.

Mad. R.—The Count's valet has arrived and the Count himself will soon be here; 'twill then be made public.

Lis.—Is it not so already, Madame?

Enter Madame Blandineau and Madame Deputy.

Lisette.—Here is your sister and your cousin. They both appear excited.

Madame Blandineau.—(To Mad. R.) What does this mean, sister? There's a very surprising rumor circulating 'round the village.

Madame Deputy.—(To Mad. R.) The most ridiculous rumor.

Madame Recorder.—Ridiculous, in what way? And, pray, what is this rumor?

Mad. B.—That you are to marry the Count; an impecunious rattle-headed nobleman. The rumor seems to me contrary to all probability.

Mad. R.—'Tis nevertheless true, sister; and now that I am, thank heaven! a Countess, we shall no longer figure in the same class.

Mad. B.—Countess, you? You a Countess, sister?

Mad. R.—Say, Madame, Madame Blandineau, and, only Madame, you understand?

Mad. B.—Only Madame, ah! I shall faint. My sister a Countess and I but a lawyer's wife. A chair, quickly, Lisette.

Lis.—Steady, Madame, steady.

Mad. D.—And you are to be a Countess, you, my cousin?

Mad. R.—Cousin me no longer, Madame Deputy, cousin me no longer.

Mad. D.—Quickly, an arm chair, Lisette; help me.

Lis.—For heaven's sake! be patient a moment.

Mad. D.—I am weak in the knees and short of breath; I shall die, I know I shall.

Mad. B.—Listen, sister, I know your object; you wish to get the upper hand of me, because you're older; you've always been crazy to do it, but I'll separate from my husband if he lets you get the best of me. Oh! you'll have plenty of opposition; trust us for that.

Mad. D.—(To Mad. B.) The family must not sit quietly by with folded hands: we must stir ourselves, cousin.

Mad. R.—Well, stir yourselves; stir yourselves as much as you please; meanwhile, I shall be stirring also, I promise you.

Lis.—(Aside.) Great heavens, what excitement! This is a lively family.

Mad. R.—Pretty creatures, they are indeed! To try and prevent my rising. This small fry is so ridiculous that——

Mad. B.—Small fry, Madame Deputy, small fry!

Mad. D.—(To Mad. B.) Heavens! small fry! and I by the grace of God, daughter, sister and niece of a notary—and the wife of a deputy, cousin.

Mad. B.—(To Mad. D.) And I, my cousin, who had more than thirteen thousand francs in marriage, as much in ready money as in clothes, furnishings and jewels. She makes me mad all over.

Mad. D.—And my blood boil.

Mad. R.—I'm getting furious, I warn you; look out for yourselves.

Lis.—There, there, hush, ladies. Be more moderate, I pray. Do you wish to have the whole village laughing at you? besides, here is that big woolen merchant, Madame Carmin, of Lombard street, who has, you know, an evil tongue.

Enter Madame Carmin.

Madame Carmin.—Good-day, my dear Madame Blandineau.

Madame Blandineau.—Very glad to see you, Madame Carmin.

Mad. C.—I cannot dine with you to-night; I shall return to Paris. I came to bid you good-bye, my dears.

Madame Recorder.—Ah! do not leave before to-morrow, I beg; you surely will not refuse to be a witness——

Mad. C.—I cannot delay my departure. I've just received word of an affair, the conclusion of which I have been impatiently awaiting: it is finished and I must leave.

Madame Deputy.—Ah! and may I ask what affair, Madame Carmin? some bargain in English or Flanders wool?

Mad. C.—Pshaw! far from that. I'm quitting business; I've grown rich and trade is now beneath me. I'm buying an office for my husband and becoming a President.

Mad. B.—You President, Madame Carmin?

Mad. C.—Yes, myself.

Mad. D.—Madame Carmin, President!

Mad. C.—Yes, Madame.

Mad. R.—And I, Countess, Madame Carmin.

Mad. C.—You a Countess, Madame?

Mad. R.—Yes, President.

Mad. C.—I'm delighted to hear it, Countess.

Mad. B.—(Aside.) This takes my breath; I can stand it no longer.

Mad. D.—(Aside.) It's enough to kill any one; I shall never recover.

Liscite.—'Tis truly great good fortune! Ah! Madame Carmin will fill that office cleverly.

Mad. C.—Oh! I shall not fill it, but my husband; of course, I shall advise him what to do in certain circumstances.

Mad. R.—It will be well to be numbered among your friends.

Mad. C.—'Tis only a country office, it is true, but there are great advantages—fine prerogatives——

Mad. D.—And what are these fine prerogatives, Madame?

Mad. C.—Well, in the first place the President in that district is absolutely the master. There are, I believe, in his whole jurisdiction no lawyers of any sort, and the President can point to himself with pride as alone representing justice. That, of itself, is very charming, ladies.

Mad. B.—Yes, truly charming to see M. Carmin the sole judge—he who knows neither law nor practice; and, perchance, cannot even read or write!

Mad. C.—Oh! excuse me, Madame Blandineau, he'll sign his name freely enough and with a flourish besides, in honor of his office.

Mad. D.—But to know how to sign one's name isn't all that's needed; it is necessary first, to judge.

Mad. C.—That's a mere bagatelle. There's a country clerk who looks after everything for thirty or forty francs a year. And, besides, with common sense and a little wit he can judge things off-hand. That's good enough for country people, anyway.

Lis.—Undoubtedly; and the most learned judges are not always the fairest.

Mad. C.—After all, it doesn't concern me. What I'm after is rank—a title that will distinguish me, and this office furnishes it. M. Carmin loves the country and his ease. Let him judge the best he can. He'll live content in the country while I shall live in Paris as President.

Mad. R.—And I as Countess. We'll meet frequently, President.

Mad. C.—Good-bye, my dear Madame Blandineau. Upon my return we'll have some good times together.

Mad. B.—Good-bye, Madame Carmin. A pleasant trip to you.

Mad. D.—(To Mad. Carmin.) The last yarn you sold me is rotten, I shall return it to you, Madame the President.

Mad. C.—They'll exchange it for you, Madame Deputy. (To Mad. R.) Good-bye, charming Countess.

Mad. R.—(To Mad. C.) Good-bye, my dear President.

(Mad. Recorder and Mad. Carmin bow profoundly to each other a number of times. Mad. Carmin leaves.)

Lis.—(Aside.) How polite quality-folk are to each other! (Aloud.) Well, here's two women that have struck luck, anyway.

Mad. B.—I won't stand it any longer; M. Blandineau must buy something that will ennoble me or I'll have nothing more to do with him. (She leaves.)

Mad. D.—My husband must cease to be simply a deputy or I shall cease to be his wife. (She leaves.)

Lis.—Courage, Madame Recorder, the battlefield remains to you alone, and at least a dozen untitled women will burst of envy over this affair.

Mad. R.—'Tis my brother-in-law I long to most affect. He called me a fool when I spoke of becoming a Countess. I sincerely hope he will become a fool when he learns that I spoke the truth.

Lis.—(Low.) But here he comes with M. Naquart.

Mad. R.—(Low.) You shall see how I'll receive them.

Enter M. Blandineau and M. Naquart.

Blandineau.—Well, sister, have you thought over the proposition I made you a short time ago? What have you decided?

Madame Recorder.—That a brother-in-law is a very persecuting animal, M. Blandineau.

Naquart.—'Tis under the auspices of Monsieur that I take the liberty——

Mad. R.—Good day, Monsieur Naquart, you love me, I'm told; I believe it. But I do not love you at all, I tell you; believe it or not, as you please.

Blan.—But, sister-in-law——

Mad. R.—But, brother-in-law—do not speak of it again; my mind—the court of last resort—has given judgment: there is no appeal. When I have once made up my mind, nothing can change my decision; ask Lisette.

Lisette.—'Tis one of Madame's finest traits.

Naq.—I had believed Madame——

Mad. R.—You're an infidel, Monsieur Naquart.

Naq.—That having paid you my first addresses, in days gone by, I——

Mad. R.—Well, times have changed, Monsieur Naquart; I was nothing but a child, a simpleton. I do remember that I had a sort of silly weakness for you, a fondness which might have led to my being your widow to-day.

Naq.—My widow, Madame?

Mad. R.—Certainly. My star decreed that I should become a widow at a certain time. It's not at all likely that my star would have disappointed me in your favor.

Blan.—Well, the first danger is over, let Monsieur Naquart risk the second.

Mad. R.—No, I advise him not to take the chance, for my star is terribly hard on husbands. According to my calculations, there are three or four yet to be exterminated in a short time, and men of rank, too; you can imagine how long a poor devil of an attorney would last.

Lis.—(Whispers to Mad. R.) What! Madame, you love the Count and yet are so hard-hearted that you expose him to this malignant influence?

Mad. R.—(Whispers to Lisette.) Yes, to combat it, my dear Lisette; the younger the man the more the resistance.

Lis.—(Whispers to Mad. R.) You are right; he couldn't find any fault with that.

Naq.—I shall not, then, have the happiness to possess you, Madame? to be near you?

Blan.—You're a greater fool than she, Monsieur Naquart.

Lis.—(Whispers to Mad. R.) This man loves you madly.

Mad. R.—(Whispers to Lisette.) My, how troublesome to merit so much love! (Aloud.) If you are so desirous of being near me, Monsieur Naquart, marry my niece; she's my other self, and I'll give her to you.

Lis.—(Aside.) Well, well, I like that!

Naq.—Are you serious, Madame?

Mad. R.—Yes, certainly; you will even please me. The poor child! I must do something for her. I charmed her lover, the Count, away; I marry him this evening—more through vanity than love; less for his qualities of mind and heart than his rank. Title, 'tis the one thing I long for; come what will, I must have title; 'tis my frailty.

Blan.—And you would marry Angélique's lover, the Count?

Mad. R.—Most assuredly. And, as I have stolen her lover, I send mine, M. Naquart, to her in exchange. A fair exchange is no robbery, and you can even let her understand, Lisette, that I give more than I take.

Lis.—Then you ought to ask something to boot, Madame. I shall seek her out as quickly as possible to impart this happy news. (Aside.) How joyful I shall make her! (She leaves.)

Naq.—Think carefully what you are doing, Madame, before you enter into this engagement.

Mad. R.—I give you my niece, Monsieur Naquart.

Naq.—When the contract is ready to be signed, pray do not retract.

Mad. R.—I, retract, Monsieur Naquart! retract! A Countess go back on her word! Ah! have no fear of that. You are familiar with these matters; have my marriage contract and your own, as well, prepared at the same time and as quickly as possible. As soon as the Count arrives we'll sign.

Blan.—But this Count——

Mad. R.—Listen; don't you dare to be wanting in respect to me when he arrives, Monsieur Blandineau. And now, attorneys, the Countess bids you farewell. (She leaves.)

Blan.—Her folly seems to have reached high-water mark; but I warn you, I shall not permit her to marry that young fellow.

Naq.—Oh! she'll not marry him. Leave that to me.

Blan.—A ruined fellow who hasn't a penny in the world.

Naq.—I know his affairs better than anyone else. I am not only his attorney, but his trustee as well, and he shall do nothing that I do not approve; so rest easy.

Enter Claudine.

Claudine.—Oh! come quickly, Monsieur, to Madame. She's gasping for breath and seems about ready to die—all because Madame Recorder is to be a Countess.

Blandineau.—Another fool!

Clau.—Madame Deputy is with her and carrying on just as badly. First they sit down; then, no quicker down they're up; moaning and lamenting all the while; each has slapped my face twice, because I couldn't keep myself from laughing. (She leaves.)

Blan.—How disgusting it is, Monsieur Naquart, to find only these silly, idiotic women wherever one turns.

Naquart.—They'll be wiser later on in life. Meanwhile, let us fully enjoy our wealth, and, by accommodating ourselves for a season to their follies and ridiculous notions, we can gently and gradually lead them back to the realms of sense.

ACT III.

Enter Angélique and the Count.

Angélique.—Count, you drive me to despair.

Count.—Charming Angélique, I adore you!

Ang.—And you hope to prove your adoration by becoming the husband of my aunt?

Count.—What would you have me do? You are penniless, while I have neither office nor revenue; and the law-suit I have just lost has completely ruined me. Birth and rank in my present condition are simply burdens. Could I ever forgive myself if I made you a partner in my unhappiness?

Ang.—Yes, for I would rather share your unhappiness than see you happy with my aunt.

Count.—But I should not be happy with her at all, I assure you; I'm not marrying the woman, but her money, which I mean to share with you.

Ang.—I do not wish it, Monsieur. I do not want money; I want only you.

Count.—Believe me, you possess my whole heart and shall always possess it. I shall cherish, worship, fairly idolize you all my life.

Ang.—But you will not marry me? That doesn't suit me in the least.

Count.—How cruel you are! Permit me to submit for a time to our evil fortune that we may insure a better. We are both young, and your aunt certainly cannot live very much longer.

Ang.—Think you I shall have the patience to await her end? No, indeed, I wish you to marry me first; my aunt has already been married, it's her turn to wait.

Count.—But what can we do? what will become of us? how shall we live?

Ang.—By mutual love; 'tis all I ask; will it not suffice you?

Count.—Charming Angélique! most adorable!

Enter Lisette.

Angélique.—Don't say so many sweet things, but love me more. (Seeing Lisette.) Ah! you here, dear Lisette; you have come just in time to help me bring the Count to reason. He obstinately persists upon marrying my aunt for her fortune.

Lisette.—Well, goodness gracious! let him do it; meanwhile, you marry someone that will make yours. M. Naquart is richer than your aunt, and you have only to say one word to become his wife.

Count.—She—marry Monsieur, my lawyer?

Lis.—Why not? This lawyer has already succeeded in getting a considerable part of your wealth; he can surely add the sweetheart. He and the aunt have come to terms, and all now depends on Mademoiselle only.

Ang.—Very well, then, Count, marry my aunt, if you like. M. Naquart will revenge me.

Count.—And you would consent to this union?

Ang.—Must we not submit to our evil fortune? Are we not both young? I shall be a widow as soon, at least, as you a widower.

Lis.—Oh! I'll guarantee that.

Count.—And I shall see you in the arms of another?

Ang.—We'll meet occasionally; I'll permit you to call when we've both grown rich.

Count.—Angélique, you drive me to despair.

Ang.—'Tis you, Count, that did the first driving.

Count.—Be merciful; keep yourself entirely for me

Ang.—Keep me yourself; but pray, why should I not be permitted the same privilege you exact?

Lis.—Both should have the same rights and privileges; 'tis but just.

Count.—Very well, then, I shall not marry your aunt, I pledge you.

Ang.—But if you do not marry me quickly, I pledge you, I shall marry M. Naquart.

Count.—I'll find a means to prevent.

Enter M. Naquart.

Angélique.—(Whispers to Lisette.) My, but he's ugly, Lisette!

Naquart.—Ah! you are the very one I'm looking for, Count. They just told me you had arrived.

Count.—I'm delighted to meet you, Monsieur; I wish to tell you that——

Naq.—As I am now engaged in a matter that concerns you, I should like a few moments' conversation before I give my final orders.

Count.—Before ending the matter as you propose, you must find a way to end my life.

Naq.—Don't be rash.

Ang.—(To M. Naquart.) I am also concerned in this affair, am I not, Monsieur?

Naq.—Yes, Mademoiselle.

Ang.—Very well, Monsieur, if it depends upon me the marriage shall never take place. Unless the Count has the impertinence to marry my aunt I shall never be fool enough to marry you—depend upon it.

Lisette.—Truly, a polite refusal!

Naq.—Which ought, I suppose, to dishearten me; but I have sworn to make you happy, and I shall ask the Count himself to induce you to do as I wish.

Count.—What! me, Monsieur?

Ang.—Oh! I shall do as he does. It behooves him to be on his guard as to the example offered.

Naq.—(To Angélique.) Kindly permit me to speak with him. Meanwhile, go with Lisette to the village clerk's, where you will find nearly all your family. We will follow you almost immediately, and if the marriage contracts I have had prepared meet with your approval, we'll sign them; if not——

Ang.—They will not meet with my approval, Monsieur, I warrant you.

Naq.—Perchance the contracts will bestow benefits upon you which may make you open your eyes.

Ang.—The more my eyes are opened the less desirable I shall find you, Monsieur; this is certain.

Naq.—No one wishes to force your inclination; but please go to the clerk's.

Ang.—I do not wish to go without the Count.

Lis.—(To Angélique.) Pshaw! who not? Come, don't be foolish; no one will force you to sign.

Ang.—Do not permit yourself, Count, to be argued into marrying my aunt; I warn you, I shall marry Monsieur out of spite. (Angélique and Lisette leave.)

Naq.—Well, now, Monsieur, at last we are alone. Tell me sincerely, what are you doing here?

Count.—I came to seek a refuge from the misery to which I am about to be reduced through the unfortunate condition of my affairs.

Naq.—And, according to what I am told, this refuge is the house of Madame Recorder, whom you intend to marry?

Count.—You have been correctly informed; 'tis my intention. She has houses, bonds and sixty thousand francs in ready money which I will command. I'll go into business.

Naq.—A man of your rank go into business!

Count.—Why not? Business men buy our lands, usurp our titles, and even our names; is it not fitting that we follow their calling, so that some day we may be able to reënter our homes and position?

Naq.—I can afford you an opportunity of entering in another manner, if you will follow my advice.

Count.—Alas! Monsieur Naquart, I owe my undoing to your advice. I was offered an advantageous compromise, you prevented my accepting it and the suit was lost.

Naq.—You should have had a unanimous verdict in your favor, but there were only young judges on the bench and our adversary was a pretty woman. How could we possibly be right!

Count.—These reflections are as sad as they are useless; we cannot retrace our steps. The only thing left for me is to seek a refuge from poverty. A rich widow opens her arms, I must throw myself into them without hesitation.

Naq.—But Angélique loves you and you return the tender passion.

Count.—Alas! Monsieur, I shall probably die of sorrow because of my inability to make her happy.

Naq.—We must find a method. But here comes Madame Recorder; continue your present affectionate relations with her and join me later at the village clerk's, where I, with Angélique, will await you.

Count.—I shall be there, Monsieur, as soon as possible. (M. Naquart leaves.)

Enter Madame Recorder and Lolive.

Lolive.—(To Mad. R., seeing the Count.) He went, of course, first to your house, Madame; he will be very sorry that he missed you.

Madame Recorder.—(Without seeing the Count.) But what road could he have taken? I awaited him in the shady lane; apart from the fact that it is the shortest and most pleasant route, intuitive desire ought to have drawn him to it.

Lo.—His intuition must have gone back on him, Madame.

Mad. R.—(Seeing the Count.) Ah! here he is.

Count.—Madame, I——

Mad. R.—Is it really you, my dearest Count? You were searching for me, I was searching for you, we were searching for each other. Love led one to the other and Hymen will unite us; what felicity! Do you fully appreciate your bliss, dearest Count, and will you always love me as ardently as you write?

Count.—Your inquiry wrongs me, Madame—my love and devotion must continue as long as your charms.

Mad. R.—As long as my charms? Ah! dearest Count, make them eternal, I beg.

Count.—They shall be, I promise you, Madame.

Lo.—Yes, each time that you, Madame, renew your charms, Monsieur's love will revive.

Mad. R.—Am I really awake? Is it not a dream? Am I indeed myself? Is it possible that I have conquered so noble a heart?

Count.—How could I resist, Madame? (Aside.) Indispensable necessity compelled me.

Mad. R.—My dearest Count, 'tis the star; Duverger always told me——

Count.—(Whispering.) Lolive, this silly old fool already makes me very tired.

Mad. R.—What's that you're saying, charming Count?

Count.—I said, Madame, that——

Lo.—He said that his trip had made him very tired.

Mad. R.—'Tis true: he looks it.

Lo.—Oh! he'll come around all right, Madame.

Mad. R.—Yes, indeed. I shall feed him on strong soup and broth. I ordered gruel prepared before I left; you shall have plenty of good gruel, my dearest Count.

Count.—Gruel for me, Madame?

Mad. R.—Yes, dearest Count, 'tis very nourishing—and refreshing. Trust me to regulate your diet and keep you in the best of health; you know how near and dear it is to me.

Count.—I'm much indebted to you, Madame—— (Low, to Lolive.) Damn the silly fool with her gruel!

Lo.—As my health is so near and dear to you, Madame, I shall need only wine, and plenty of it, if you please, to refresh me.

Mad. R.—Don't worry, you will want for nothing.

Enter the Schoolmaster.

Schoolmaster.—Madame, the boys and girls with the fiddlers have assembled beneath the village elm to rehearse the trifles that I composed at your command. Come and hear them.

Madame Recorder.—No, bring them here.

School.—Here? Very well, I'll bring them; 'twill not, per-

haps, go smoothly at first, but we'll do better this evening. (He leaves.)

Count.—Really, Madame, what does this mean?

Mad. R.—Oh! just a little fête to celebrate your arrival. Some songs and verses that I have had prepared for you.

Count.—For me, Madame?

Mad. R.—For you, for me, for all of us.

Count.—'Tis very kind and clever, I'm sure. While you are managing the rehearsal, kindly permit me to look after a little affair of my own which needs attention and makes me somewhat ill at ease.

Mad. R.—Then go, by all means, dearest Count, but hasten your return, I beg.

Count.—With all possible speed. Follow me, Lolive.

Mad. R.—Good-bye, my dearest Count.

Lolive.—Good-bye, my dearest Countess. (The Count and Lolive leave.)

Mad. R.—(Alone.) The handsome fellow! He was made for me, I was made for him, and 'twas love, without a doubt, who formed each for the other.

Enter Madame Blandineau.

Madame Blandineau.—My dear sister, permit me to embrace you. All my troubles are over, nor have I longer the slightest ill will toward you. I offer my congratulations upon your becoming a Countess. Now congratulate me: I am a Baroness.

Madame Recorder.—You a Baroness, my dear sister?

Mad. B.—Yes, my dear Countess, 'tis fully determined. M. Blandineau sells his practice and gives forty thousand francs for the Barony of Limpwaddle: the deal is settled. I am no longer Madame Blandineau, but the Baroness Limpwaddle, at this very moment.

Mad. R.—That is truly charming, sister, sweetly pretty! My sister, the Baroness! Your sister, the Countess, is delighted, and our family now made most illustrious.

Mad. B.—Our cousin, Madame Deputy, will die of vexation, while Madame Substitute will hang herself. We shall have a lot of sorry countenances 'round our table this evening.

Mad. R.—We must act with all the dignity that befits our rank, Baroness. I beg, as a special favor, from to-day on, no more familiarity with the untitled.

Mad. B.—The favor's granted, Countess; no more familiarity for me.

Mad. R.—M. Naquart marries Angélique. If we could make him also leave the common herd; he's a good fellow, whose merits entitle him to become one of us, Baroness.

Mad. B.—Oh! he will, Countess; he's bargaining for a Marquisate now.

Mad. R.—A Marquisate, sister, did you say a Marquisate? M. Naquart a Marquis? The Marquis Naquart! Well, that would be funny, for 'tis a name that certainly never was intended to have a title prefixed. (They hear music in the distance.)

Enter the Schoolmaster.

Schoolmaster.—My young people are quite ready, Madame, but as I see the village clerk coming with a number of people and bringing some papers to be signed, in order not to interrupt or to be interrupted, they'll await yonder, if you like, 'till your business is finished.

Madame Recorder.—'Twill soon be done.

Enter M. Blandineau, M. Naquart, the Count, the Village Clerk, Angélique and Lisette.

Madame Recorder.—Come, make haste, Clerk; is all as it should be, Monsieur Naquart?

Naquart.—I have had all prepared as carefully for you, Madame, as for myself. You have only to read, Clerk——

Clerk.—(Reading.) "Before Bastian Trigaudinet——

Lisette.—Pshaw! this reading is simply so much time thrown away. My! but you have little impatience, Madame. 'Twill delay your title a full hour.

Naq.—The eagerness I feel to become your nephew——

Count.—My excessive love causes me to suffer severely, I must admit, at the slightest delay.

Mad. R.—O you love-sick darling! It shall never be said that I was less eager than you, dearest Count. Come, I'm ready to sign, Clerk. (She signs.) Now 'tis your turn, Count. (He signs.) And now yours, Monsieur Naquart.

Naq.—'Twould not be gallant were I more distrustful than you, Madame; I sign blindly.

Mad. R.—Truly, you run a great risk! Now, for you, niece.

Angelique.—I do not examine at all, aunt. I am satisfied to fulfill your desires.

Mad. R.—'Tis a wise choice. Now, will you not also sign, Baron de Limpwaddle?

Blandineau.—I am careful never to refuse my signature to marriages that please me. I have wished for a long time to see you the wife of M. Naquart and to give Angélique to the Count.

Mad. R.—Very well, Monsieur, if this be true, I warn you do not sign, for 'tis quite the opposite of what you wish. 'Tis Angélique who is Madame Naquart, while I am the Countess.

Clerk.—Not at all, Madame; not at all; you've got it twisted: though I am only a village notary, I make no such gross blunders.

Mad. R.—What! I've got it twisted. You're only a fool, Clerk; I haven't got that twisted.

Clerk.—No, plague take me, Madame——

Mad. R.—Humph! this is a pretty fellow, Lisette!

Lis.—'Tis idle to dispute, Madame. He must know better than you; remember, he drew the contracts.

Mad. R.—Monsieur Naquart!

Naq.—'Tis a mistake, Madame, a misunderstanding; but one very difficult to rectify.

Mad. R.—Difficult or not, I warrant you, neither the Count nor I propose to be the dupe of a mistake; am I not right, dearest Count?

Count.—No, Madame, I shall not be a dupe, but I shall certainly profit by the mistake.

Mad. R.—What! you will profit by it, you faithless fellow! To lose me you call profit?

Naq.—I do not count that way, Madame; my greatest happiness will be to possess you.

Mad. R.—But you will never possess me, Monsieur Naquart; do what you will, you shall never possess me, I tell you.

Blan.—Your signature, Madame, attests the contrary.

Lis.—Would you trouble the Clerk to rewrite all that, Madame?

Clerk.—'Twould be a lot of trouble, Madame, to say the least; a lot of trouble.

Mad. R.—Madame Naquart! I should be called Madame Naquart! I'd rather be dead.

Naq.—If 'tis only a question of the name, Madame, you shall be called Countess, if you will. The Count's estate now belongs to me; I'll return it at my death and make him my sole heir; you have done the same for your niece. They will surely be willing to relinquish a title which pleases you.

Count.—Most willing, Monsieur; we are yours to command.

Mad. R.—'Tis an arrangement which alters the matter entirely, and, provided I can have my own carriage and you are no longer an attorney——

Naq.—Your every wish shall be satisfied, Madame.

Mad. R.—I want three lackeys—the most stalwart and magnificent in Paris.

Naq.—You shall have four, if you like.

Mad. R.—We'll occupy the same house, Baroness.

Madame Blandineau.—And share the expense of a stately concierge, Countess.

Mad. R.—Yes, quite willingly. I've been long convinced that I should win a title and cut a figure. (To the Count.) You'll bitterly regret me, you little villain, bitterly regret me; but I shall soon be a widow. Come, Schoolmaster, we'll now listen to a little song or two while awaiting dinner, and, when 'tis ready, let the butler of my sister, the Baroness, so announce, but with proper ceremony and all the deference due our rank.